Hafa Adai!

Military exercises to take place on Saipan, Rota, Tinian. PAGE 3
US opens embassy in Solomon Islands to counter China. PAGE 7

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Audit bares more questioned costs

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An independent audit has determined that the CNMI is not in compliance with some requirements regarding the Statistical, Research, and Methodology Assistance program of the U.S. Department of Commerce, with questioned costs amounting to a total of $2,019,626.

In a report last week, auditing company Deloitte & Touch LLC said that questioned costs of $1,957,419 exist for noncompliance with allowable costs/cost principles requirements, and questioned costs of $62,207 exist for noncompliance with applicable procurement regulations.

These were among the many deficiencies that Deloitte outlined in its report that was submitted last week to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

The Office of the Public Auditor hired Deloitte to audit the financial statements of the Department of Public Lands major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the CNMI as of and for the year ending Sept. 30, 2020, and the related notes to the financial statements. The auditor was also engaged to audit the financial statements of government activities and each of the remaining major funds.

The findings of deficiencies and questioned costs with respect to the Statistical,

See AUDIT on Page 4

OUT OF $250,000 BUDGET

$119K spent for AD inauguration

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Of $250,000 reprogrammed funds allocated for the inauguration of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, the Inauguration Committee expended only $119,000, or 47%, according to committee chair Oscar M. Babauta.

Babauta, who submitted the financial and activities report to comply with the law, said that Palacios and Apatang had instructed them not to exceed the $250,000 nor go over the threshold of $150,000.

It was learned in Babauta's financial and activities summary report that he submitted to Palacios and Apatang last Jan. 27 that then-governor Ralph DLG Torres had reprogrammed $250,000 for the inaugural activities. Babauta said the Executive Leadership Committee received this information about the avail of

See INAUGURATION on Page 4

CPA urged to direct RTT to obtain 75-ton crane ASAP

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) has requested the Commonwealth Ports Authority to direct the Rota Terminal and Transfer Company Inc. to immediately obtain a 75-ton crane with a crane-scale mechanism and make it accessible to all vessels arriving and departing the Rota West Harbor.

Manglona, who chairs the Senate Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communication Committee, asked CPA executive director Christopher S. Tenorio last Thursday to direct RTT to immediately obtain—at RTT's expense—a temporary crane of that magnitude/quality from one or more crane providers to be selected by RTT or CPA.

RTT has the exclusive right to conduct terminal and stevedoring services at the Rota West Harbor seaport.

Last Jan. 12, Tenorio sent a demand letter to RTT general manager Viola Hocog-Atalig to purchase a crane, repair

See CPA on Page 4

PROPERTY DAMAGE
Thousands of dollars of damage to the baseball and soccer playing field fences and backstop were caused by a hit-and-run driver late Saturday night at the playing field across the Brilliant Star Montessori School on Navy Hill. The reported damage and erratic drivers in the neighborhood reportedly followed a wedding party at a nearby establishment. The playing field is used by the school and sporting groups for events and by the local community.

MARK FARMER

Quake kills at least 560 people in Turkey, Syria

By SUZAN FRASER
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP)—A powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit southern Turkey and northern Syria early Monday, toppling buildings and killing at least 568 people. With hundreds injured, the toll was expected to rise as rescue workers searched the rubble in cities and towns across the area.

On both sides of the border, residents jolted out of sleep by the pre-dawn quake rushed outside on a cold, rainy and snowy winter night, as buildings were flattened and strong aftershocks continued.

Rescue workers and residents in multiple cities searched for survivors, working through tangles of metal

See QUAKE on Page 4

People search through the wreckage of a collapsed building in Azmarin town, in Idlib province, northern Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023.

AP

INSIDE

LOCAL
The U.S. is expanding its military presence in Asia, in a move aimed at countering Beijing.

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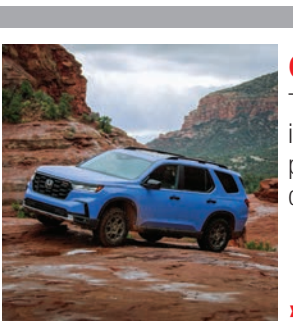

OVERDRIVE
The Honda Pilot TrailSport is the intersection of performance but aimed at off-roading.

» PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE
Viola Davis is now an EGOT—a term for those who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony.

» PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Northern Marianas College president Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Ed.D., Northern Marianas Technical Institute chief executive officer Jodina Attao, and Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada of the CNMI Public School System recently met with acting Labor secretary Leila Staffler to discuss workforce development initiatives.

NMC

NMTech partners with a beauty salon to offer cosmetology trade

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute and Salt & Barber have started partnership that would allow the trades school to offer a course on cosmetology.

Under a memorandum of agreement the two signed last month, NMTech will develop a Cosmetology Program with the help of Salt and Barber, a beauty salon.

NMTech plans on offering Cosmetology Level 1 and Cosmetology Level 2 to teach interested students the art of the cosmetology trade.

Cosmetology Level 1 will teach about safety, sanitation, basic hair cutting techniques, basic manicure and pedicures, basic facials, and basic customer service.

In Cosmetology Level 2, NMTech plans to teach safety and sanitation in using chemicals, color theory, advanced hair techniques, and advanced nail treatment.

NMTech is also looking to teach more aspects of cosmetology including skincare, make up, and customer service.

Instructions will be at the NMTech campus, while lab work will be completed at Salt & Barber on actual clients, with the agreement and supervision of the instructor. NMTech plans to have the program ready for students by the 2023 fall semester and have them intern at the salon by January 2024.

"NMTech wants to thank owners, Jomari and Justin, along with general manager Kurt Ellis from Salt and Barber for helping spearhead this curriculum and helping the CNMI in building capacity," said Benjamin Babauta, NMTech marketing and outreach coordinator.

For the 2023 spring semester, NMTech has expanded their Culinary Arts program, which now offers Culinary Arts II.

Visit their website at www.nmtechcnmi.org for more information, call (670) 235-6684, or visit their NMTech campus at Lower Base to learn more. ***(Leigh Gases)***

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Saipan
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VALENTINE'S DAY - TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY
KEVIN'S
The Prime Rib & Seafood
Valentine's Day Set Menu at Kevin's
Wine & dine with an extra special romantic experience at Kevin's, featuring a delicious set menu in an intimate, candlelit dream-like atmosphere.
Tuesday, February 14th
6-10pm
$85 per person
-or- $150 per couple
Wine Flight available
Complimentary rose for the ladies
Costa
Terrace Restaurant
Valentine's Dinner Buffet at Costa
Featuring Seafood on Ice, Steak, Ham, Free-flowing beer & wine and more
Tuesday, February 14th
6-9pm
$43 AD | $21.50 CH (Age 6-11)
Stay the Night!
Valentine's Day Dinner Buffet available with Dine & Relax Staycation Package
aqua resort club
SPA
Sweeten your February
Chocolate Full Spa Treatment
Full body massage with rich melted chocolate & essential oil, followed by full body wrap & head massage, ended with a rejuvenating coffee body scrub
90 minute | $150
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Full body massage with chocolate & essential oil, followed by full body wrap & head massage
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Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands

TINIAN MUNICIPAL SCHOLARSHIP BOARD

Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan

PO Box 520059 • San Jose Village • Tinian, MP 96952
Phone (670) 433-1806 • Fax (670) 433-1819
Email: tinianscholarship@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Tinian Municipal Scholarship Board hereby gives notice that there will be a Special Board Meeting on Thursday, February 09, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., at the DLNR Building (Scholarship Office), San Jose Village, Tinian.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY
- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Adoption of Agenda
- D. Adoption of Minutes
  - October 30, 2022 (Special Meeting)
  - February 02, 2023 (Regular Meeting)

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS*

III. OLD BUSINESS
- A. Review & Approval of remaining Spring Applications

IV. NEW BUSINESS

V. MISCELLANEOUS

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VII. ADJOURNMENT

/S/Rodney S. Cabarles
Chairman

[1]We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments on the day of the meeting.
[2] Pursuant to 1 CMC section 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time.
[3]Individuals with special needs requiring special accommodations, please contact the TMSB office at least 48 hours prior to schedule meeting for assistance.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery
(CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary	Opening Date	Closing Date
2023-009	CDBG-DR Housing Supervisor (1-Position)	UNGRADED $40,000.00 to $45,000.00 Per annum	February 7, 2023	February 22, 2023 4:00 PM

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information can be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; the CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre- employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447 or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

Military exercises to take place on Saipan, Rota, Tinian

The Commonwealth Ports Authority advises the public that military exercises will be conducted on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota throughout February 2023.

The exercise being conducted is Cope North 2023, which is a Pacific Air Forces-funded multilateral filed training exercise. The Pacific Air Forces is a major command of the United States that supports the objectives of the United States Indo-Pacific Command. PACAF, in coordination with other components, allies, and partners, provides USINDOPACOM with continuous air, space, and cyberspace capabilities to ensure regional stability and security.

The Cope North 2023 exercise includes a focus on emphasizing the exchange and execution of tactics, techniques, and procedures, while enhancing the interoperability among assets, in a variety of missions. These assets include U.S. components, as well as the Japan Air Self Defense Force, and the Royal Australian Air Force. The military exercise also serves as an opportunity to train for humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and contingency response scenarios.

The tri-lateral force envisions providing aid in the case of a natural disaster by establishing a "hub" outside of the area of impact where resources can be distributed to "spokes" that are established within the area of impact. In the exercise scenario, participants have determined that Guam will be used as the "hub" location and Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will be optimal "spoke" airfields to accommodate contingency response objectives. The primary goal of the exercise is to strengthen interoperability while developing the capability of the agile employment of forces to be utilized to assist operations during actual disasters and contingency operations.

The public can expect to see military training operations at all CNMI airports and the Jose P. San Nicolas Commercial Port of Tinian throughout the month of February and early March 2023. A public hearing is scheduled today, Feb. 7, 2023, on Saipan, Tinian and Rota. The public hearing on Saipan is at 9am in the ARFF Classroom at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport; the public hearing on Tinian is at 11:30am at the Tinian Youth Center; and the public hearing on Rota is at 4pm at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport's Departure Terminal.

For more information, contact the Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs at (670) 488-0220 or Joint Region Marianas Public Affairs Office at (671) 349-4055/3209 or email them at CJRMPAO@fe.navy.mil. ***(CPA)***

File photo shows a U.S. Air Force C-130H Hercules flying over North Field, Tinian, Marianna Islands, during Cope North 15 last Feb. 26, 2015. North Field served as the World War II headquarters for the 509th Composite Group that launched the atomic bomb attacks against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in August of 1945.

U.S. AIR FORCE/
TECH. SGT. JASON ROBERTSON

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Order Clerk
Duties and Responsibilities: Verify customer and order information for correctness, checking it against previously obtained information as necessary. Receive customer orders and respond to customer complaints. Review orders for completeness. Inform customers of order information, such as unit prices, or shipping dates, and any anticipated delays. Obtain customers' names, addresses, and billing information. Recommend merchandise that will meet customers' needs. Prepare invoices according to orders received. Check inventory records to determine availability of requested merchandise. Collect payment for merchandise ordered, record transactions and send items such as cash and checks for further processing at the mXain office. File copies of invoices, delivery receipts and other pertinent documents. Adjust or record inventory movement such as warehouse transfers. Perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Must be High School graduate. Proficient with Personal Computers and software. Knowledge of basic mathematics and basic calculations. Good communication skills.

Position: Delivery Driver
Duties and Responsibilities: Drive a light truck or van, primarily to deliver goods or merchandise. Load and unload truck or van with merchandise verifying the contents against invoice documents. Perform mathematical computation in case of returns or adjustments. Present bill or invoice and collect payments for goods delivered. Turn in complete invoice copies and money received from deliveries. Inspect vehicle before using to ensure that vehicles are in proper working condition and record results in a vehicle log sheet. Report any mechanical problems encountered with the vehicle. May be required to load and unload merchandise in the container, help in stacking merchandise in the warehouse shelves manually or by using forklift. Perform other duties related to warehouse activity as needed from time to time.
Qualification Requirements: High School graduate with minimum one year work related experience required. Must be able to lift at least 50 lb. objects daily. Must be proficient in mathematical calculations. Must be able to speak and communicate clearly. Must have a valid CNMI driver's license and possess a good driving record. Must pass a Driver's Medical Health Screening including drug test.

Position: Warehouse Worker
Duties and Responsibilities: Unload merchandise from container to be stocked in warehouse shelves manually or by using dolly, pallet jack, or forklift. Examine and inspect merchandise for any damage or spoilage, reporting any discrepancy or damage. Receive and count merchandise, and record data manually or using computer. Clean and maintain supplies, tools, equipment, and storage or work areas to ensure compliance with safety regulations. Provide assistance or direction to other warehouse workers and perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Minimum one year work related experience required. Ability to perform physical activities that require considerable use of arms and legs and moving the whole body such as climbing, lifting, balancing, walking, stooping, and handling of materials. Must be able to do strenuous work such as unloading container vans, stacking, lifting, carrying, and moving heavy objects. Must be able to lift 50 to 80 lbs. frequently and up to 90 lbs. occasionally. Must pass food handler certification

To apply:
Apply in person or send complete and detailed resume to: Yaong Corporation Unit 6 Rem Ctr. Cheribiyan Dr Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mail to P.O. Box 505946, Saipan, MP 96950, or by e-mail to yaong.hr2@gmail.com. Police clearance, background check, and drug test may be required prior to employment.

JOB FAIR
Tuesday, February 7, 2023
Wednesday, February 8, 2023
Pacific Islands Club Saipan
Napa Room (Next to Lobby)
10:00am - 5:30pm

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- Security Officers / Mobile Patrol
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G4S HR Department (671)646-2307 ext 5104 or 5154

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$10K bail set for man accused of arson

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a $10,000 cash bail on a man who is being accused of deliberately setting the former Mom's Round Two Bar and Grill on fire last week.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho imposed yesterday a $10,000 cash bail on Aurelio Reiong, the homeless man accused of setting ablaze the abandoned bar and grill in Garapan last week.

Reiong, 41, is facing charges of arson and related offenses.

Following the bail hearing yesterday, Reiong was remanded back to Department of Corrections custody and was ordered to return to court on Feb. 16, for a preliminary hearing. His arraignment was set for Feb. 27.

According to court documents, after interviewing the individual who called the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services to report the incident, it was discovered that Reiong was the last person inside the abandoned building right after the fire began.

DFEMS' Division of Fire Prevention and Arson stated that a witness told fire investigators that he saw Reiong go inside the abandoned building at around 1:25pm last Thursday and leave right after the fire started.

At around 2:50pm that same day, Fire investigators contacted police, stating that they were with the possible suspect, later identified as Reiong.

Reiong agreed to an interview with police and he allegedly admitted to the crime, stating that he had gone inside the building to drink water and then lit a cigarette.

Reiong stated that while inside, he saw a pile of paper and cardboard on the floor and took his already lit cigarette and burned the pile of trash inside.

He said that, after noting that the the fire had gotten bigger, he fled the building to go to the poker arcade across the street.

At around 7:14pm that same day, Reiong was brought to the Department of Corrections to be booked and detained.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, there were no fatalities and the fire did not find its way to neighboring establishments or structures.

DFEMS said the building sustained moderate to severe heat and smoke damage and the fire originated from the northern part of the structure and the fire was started from the inside.

INAUGURATION

From Page 1

funds in great anticipation of planning a historic event for the Commonwealth.

Babauta said the Inauguration Committee ensured that the funds were expended diligently and with proper accountability. He said the Inauguration Committee assigned their Fiscal Affairs Subcommittee to track all expenses associated with inauguration activities.

The law required the Inauguration Committee to submit its report to the Office of the Governor and Legislature 30 days after the inauguration.

The inauguration of Palacios and Apatang took place at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe last Jan. 9.

Among the top expenses were $14,400 for public lunch by Kalayaan food catering, $12,000 for Rota and Tinian security detail, $12,000 for pictures/videography by Island Image and Motion, and $11,170 for welcoming dinner at the Aqua Resort Club after the Red Mass at Mount Carmel Church.

CPA

From Page 1

parts or similar equipment for stevedoring services by Feb. 12, 2023, after learning that RTT's crane is inoperable.

Tenorio threatened RTT that CPA may cite it for default if the crane is not obtained and the stevedoring services have not resumed by Feb. 12.

Manglona said RTT should immediately cede to a third party, to be selected and designated by CPA, the full authority and capacity to obtain and ship to Rota a temporary or permanent crane of that magnitude and to exclusively provide and operate that crane at Rota West Harbor, in addition to performing all CPA port/terminal facility stevedoring services and commercial activities.

Manglona also asked that CPA issue a written directive to all enterprises that load and offload vessels at the Rota West Harbor to direct that such enterprises immediately acquire a properly calibrated and certified flat-scale to weigh palleted and breakbulk cargo loads of less than 10 tons.

As veteran CPA personnel are fully aware, Manglona said, RTT's operation of CPA seaport facilities during past decades "has been fraught with a litany of failures, deficiencies, and irregularities."

Manglona said these have ranged the gamut "from breaches of the reputedly no-bid/exclusive use lease agreements prior CPA officials have conferred upon RTT since and prior to Jan. 29, 1996, to reputed patterns and practices of arbitrary rate and fee manipulation, price gouging, and weight/measure falsifications."

The senator said this history makes clear that the presently inoperable RTT crane, as described in Tenorio's Jan. 12, 2023 demand letter to Hocog- Atalig, is just the tip of the iceberg and the latest of these purportedly improper patterns and practices on the part of RTT.

Manglona noted that just 10 months ago, RTT yet again had no operable/functioning crane. He said that scenario compelled him to describe some of these issues and concerns in his March 14, 2022, letter to Tenorio.

The senator said this perhaps compelled CPA on March 15, 2022, to direct RTT to subsequently procure a crane or face default of its CPA lease agreement.

He said RTT's most recent failing, having no operational crane at the Rota West Harbor, yet again compels Rota community members to bear heavy economic burdens and detrimental consequences.

Manglona said his understanding is that RTT now proposes to resume stevedore operations in substandard fashion—making use of a boom truck mechanism incapable of removing individual, fully laden, commercial shipping containers. He said this is simply intolerable.

The senator said he has contacted and conferred with several CNMI- and Guam-based entities who have expressed their willingness and ability to provide cranes of up to 75-ton capacity to be shipped immediately to Rota for stevedore/port/terminal operation activities at the Rota West Harbor.

Manglona said the exorbitant cost of goods, commodities, and necessities on Rota arises from this inequity and that it has forced many from the island to leave.

"They long but remain unable to return until and unless living on Rota becomes reasonably affordable," he said.

AUDIT

From Page 1

Research, and Methodology Assistance program are in Deloitte's report on the CNMI's compliance with each major federal program, report on internal control over compliance, and report on schedule of expenditures of federal awards.

Deloitte said they identified certain deficiencies in internal control that they consider to be material weaknesses and significant deficiencies.

In response to Deloitte's findings and recommendations, acting Department of Finance secretary Tracy B. Norita said that Finance will revisit the internal controls of each agency to ensure that it aligns with the compliance requirements and the CNMI's policies.

Norita said the CNMI just launched its new financial system (Tyler Hub Munis) in October 2021, which is designed to monitor the proper process of each transaction based on the CNMI policies and internal controls. She said all the required approvals and documents will be processed in this new system.

Norita said they will ensure that all the personnel handling the grants will be aware and knowledgeable of the overall compliance requirements for each federal award and a proper approval process will be in place to review the completeness and accuracy of the expenditures.

With respect to the $1,957,419 in questioned costs, Deloitte said the cause is that CNMI management did not effectively enforce recordkeeping controls and did not monitor transactions for required approvals.

Regarding $62,207 in questioned costs, Deloitte said the cause is that the CNMI did not enforce compliance with established procurement policies and procedures over procurement.

Deloitte recommends that responsible personnel should monitor and enforce compliance with applicable procurement requirements, including the review of procurement files for completeness as to written rationales for any deviations from applicable procurement requirements.

The auditor also recommends that CNMI management should establish a recordkeeping system, whereby underlying support is filed accordingly to substantiate costs.

Deloitte said management should also strengthen monitoring controls over transactions so that proper reviews and approvals are documented to substantiate program costs in accordance with applicable costs/cost principles.

QUAKE

From Page 1

and giant piles of concrete.

In the Turkish city of Adana, one resident said three buildings near his home collapsed. "I don't have the strength anymore," one survivor could be heard calling out from beneath the rubble as rescue workers tried to reach him, said the resident, journalism student Muhammet Fatih Yavus. Further east in Diyarbakir, cranes and rescue teams rushed people on stretchers out of a mountain of pancaked concrete floors that was once an apartment building.

On the Syrian side of the border, the quake smashed opposition-held regions that are packed with some 4 million people displaced from other parts of Syria by the country's long civil war. Many of them live in decrepit conditions with little health care. Rescue workers said hospitals in the area were quickly filled with the injured.

"We fear that the deaths are in the hundreds," Muheeb Qaddour, a doctor, said by phone from the town of Atmeh, referring to the entire rebel-held area. Raed Salah, the head of the White Helmets, the emergency organization in opposition areas, said whole neighborhoods were collapsed in some areas.

The quake, felt as far away as Cairo, struck a region that has been shaped by more than a decade of civil war in Syria. Millions of Syrian refugees live in Turkey. The swath of Syria affected by the quake is divided between government-held territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by Russian-backed government forces. The quake was centered about 90 kilometers (60 miles) from the Syrian border outside the city of Gaziantep, a major Turkish provincial capital.

At least 20 aftershocks followed, some hours later during daylight, the strongest measuring 6.6, Turkish authorities said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Twitter that "search and rescue teams were immediately dispatched" to the areas hit by the quake.

"We hope that we will get through this disaster together as soon as possible and with the least damage," he wrote.

Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management agency said at least 284 people in seven Turkish provinces. The agency said 440 people were injured. The death toll in government-held areas of Syria climbed to 237 with more than 630 injured, according to Syrian state media. At least 47 people were reported killed in rebel-held areas.

Buildings were reported collapsed in a cross-border swath extending from Syria's cities of Aleppo and Hama to Turkey's Diyarbakir, more than 330 kilometers (200 miles) to the northeast.

In Turkey, people trying to leave the quake-stricken regions caused traffic jams, hampering efforts of emergency teams trying to reach the affected areas. Authorities urged residents not to take to the roads. Mosques around the region were being opened up as a shelter for people unable to return to damaged homes amid temperatures that hovered around freezing.

The quake heavily damaged Gaziantep's most famed landmark, its historic castle perched atop a hill in the center of the city. Parts of the fortresses' walls and watch towers were leveled and other parts heavily damaged, images from the city showed.

In Diyarbakir, rescue teams called for silence as they tried to listen for survivors under the wreckage of an 11-story building. Rescue workers pulled out one man, carrying him on a stretcher through a dense crowd of hundreds of people anxiously watching the rescue efforts. A gray-haired woman wailed before being escorted away by a man, while a rescue worker wearing a white helmet tried to calm a crying girl, who was also being cuddled by two friends.

In northwest Syria, the quake added new woes to the opposition-held enclave centered on the province of Idlib, which has been under siege for years, with frequent Russian and government airstrikes. The territory depends on a flow of aid from nearby Turkey for everything from food to medical supplies.

The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense described the situation there as "disastrous" adding that entire buildings have collapsed and people are trapped under the rubble.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

SHRM meeting to discuss alternatives to CW-1 visa

The CNMI Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management will be taking up the subject of alternatives to the CW-1 visa that CNMI employers may use to hire foreign workers.

The subject will be discussed at length during the SHRM CNMI Chapter's general membership meeting on Feb. 23, 2023, at the Charley's Cabaret, Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

Attorney Bruce Mailman, who is an immigration expert, will talk about alternatives to the CW-1 visa such as a green card sponsorship and H1-B visa, among others.

The meeting on Feb. 23, 2023, a Thursday, will start at 8:30am. Doors will open at 8am. The following fees apply: $30 for members and $35 for non-members.

This meeting will include breakfast. Seating is limited, so registration is a must to attend this meeting.

To register, please sign up at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe775NWugid_JyKMsGlLvJhL1tiT-0YM-Kilf5cm0jdgxcPXDg/viewform.

One person per one entry. One representative may submit multiple entries for each participant under their company.

SHRM is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. The Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, and more than 575 affiliated chapters.

The CNMI Chapter is affiliated with the national organization.

(Saipan Tribune)

GMS Falcons bag places in various competitions

From left to right, Nelisa Nicole Acaba, Paula Angela Bernardo, Elesha Louise Manansala, Isabella Marie Mallari, Avei Miguel Aumentado, and Paul Bernardo. GMS

Middle School students of Green Meadow School bagged ribbons at the January competitions of the Junior Thespian and National Junior Speech and Debate held at Oleai Elementary School and Kagman High School on two consecutive weekends.

The administration would like to congratulate the following students who also qualified for the regional competitions this February. They are:

- Nelisa Nicole Acaba, 3rd place, Duet Acting
- Isabella Mallari, 3rd place, Duet Acting
- Elesha Louise Manansala, 3rd place, Impromptu Speaking B
- Elesha Louise Manansala, 5th place, DUO B
- Paula Bernardo, 5th place, DUO B
- Paul Bernardo, 4th place, Story Telling B
- Avei Miguel Aumentado, 4th place, Poetry A

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Public warned of rip currents

There is a high risk of rip currents through late Sunday night.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous rip currents are present in east facing reefs of the Marianas through late Tuesday night. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Rip risk may briefly decrease to moderate on Wednesday night but an east swell will rebuild again on Thursday through the weekend.

The public is reminded to stay out of the water along east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

4.3-magnitude quake in Pagan region

At 7:40am on Feb. 6, 2023, a report of a 4.3-magnitude earthquake occurred at 18.385°N 145.310°E of the Pagan region in the Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670)-237-8000. ***(PR)***

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In Loving Memory of

+Juana Faisao Osarch

Sunrise- February 18, 1962
Sunset-January 31, 2023
Beloved wife, mother, and grandmother

In her new life, she now joins her:
Parents:
Father: +Jacinto Kaipat Faisao
Mother: +Hermana Fejeran Faisao

In-Laws:
Father-in-Law: +Mai Osarch
Mother-in-Law: +Sariang Osarch

Her memories will forever live in the hearts of her:
Husband: Roger Osarch

Children:
Jeremy & Rozanne Faisao (Leiane Esther, Jaydon Jacinto, Rylee Doris, Jayke Yuki)
Roger Mai Jr & Remy Villagomez (Neveah Faithe Irachel)
Bettina Mai & Elman Seman

Siblings:
Juan & Carleen Faisao (Children)
+Marcelo F. Faisao (Children)
Doris F. Faisao (Children)
+Francisco F. & Jennifer Faisao (Children)
Susana F. Faisao (Children)
Felicidad "Doll" & Charlie Boddy (Child)
+Alicia Ruben (Child)
Bobbie Pangelinan (Children)
Donny & Bernice Fejeran (Children)

In-Laws:
Iroruo M & Masasinge Arurang (Children)
Lily N & +Tobias Aguon (Children)
Ressiung Mai
Dilmai Saiske (Son)
Imengel & Celestino Malsol (Children)
+Akihito Mai
Sayuri & Flaviano Hideo (Son)
Nangisa & Norman Sato (Children)
Marilyn & Steve Marron (Children)
+Freddy & Kinsiana Ngirailild (Children)
Kathleen &+Motekiai Taukolo (Children)

+Juana is also loved and cherished by numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and friends.

Daily Mass of Intention and Rosary is being offered at the Santa Soledad Church at 6:00 pm. Monday Mass is offered at the San Vicente church followed by the Rosary at the Santa Soledad Church at 7:00 pm.

On Wednesday, February 8th, 2023, her remains will be escorted from the Borja Funeral Home at 7:30 am to Santa Soledad Church. Responso services will be at 8:00 am followed by the Holy Rosary at 8:30 am.

Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11:00 am followed by Interment Service at the Chalan Kanoa Cemetery where she will be laid to rest.

Please join us in Prayer.

Thank you, Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Olomwaay, and Kom Kmal Mesulang
The Family

How the US is boosting military alliances to counter China

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)— The U.S. is expanding it military presence in Asia, in a string of moves aimed at countering Beijing and reassuring Indo-Pacific allies that America will stand with them against threats from China and North Korea.

The U.S. actions stretch from Japan to the Solomon Islands. And they involve more and increasingly advanced military exercises in the region and additional troop rotations in key areas facing the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. In some cases, they also could provide logistical support in the event of any conflict with China, specifically in defense of the self-governing island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own.

The announcements in recent weeks have triggered angry responses from both China and North Korea. And they come as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to go to China next week in what will be the first visit by a Cabinet-level official in the Biden administration.

PHILIPPINES

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, on his seventh trip to Asia during his two years in office, announced an agreement with the Philippines on Thursday that gives the U.S. access to four more military camps in the Southeast Asian country.

He called it a "big deal" even though it doesn't establish a permanent U.S. military presence, which is prohibited under the Philippine Constitution. What it does do, however, is give U.S. troops—rotating in and out of the Philippines—a bird's eye view of two critical spots: the Taiwan Strait and disputed regions of the South China Sea.

There are about 500 U.S. troops in the Philippines on any given day, but thousands rotate in and out over the course of a year for military exercises, humanitarian aid, training and other missions, according to officials. The Philippines allows American forces to stay in barracks within designated Philippine camps. The U.S. already had access to five Philippine military bases.

Standing with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr., during a press conference in Manila, Austin said the efforts to strengthen the alliance "are especially important as the People's Republic of China continues to advance its illegitimate claims in the West Philippine Sea."

In response, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswomen Mao Ning accused the U.S. of pursuing "its selfish agenda" with the new arrangement, calling it "an act that escalates tensions in the region and endangers regional peace and stability."

SOUTH KOREA

In Seoul on Tuesday, Austin announced that the U.S. would increase its deployment of advanced military assets to the Korean Peninsula, including fighter jets and aircraft carriers to boost joint training and planning.

He and South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-Sup agreed to expand their combined military exercises, including more live-fire demonstrations. And they discussed preparations for a simulated exercise in February aimed at sharpening their response if North Korea used nuclear weapons.

AP

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, left, shakes hands with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr. at a joint press conference in Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in metro Manila, Philippines on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023.

JEON HEON-KYUN/POOL PHOTO VIA AP

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, left, shakes hands with South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup after a joint press conference after their meeting at the Defense Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023.

AP

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, second from left, walks past military guards during his arrival at the Department of National Defense in Camp Aguinaldo military camp in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines on Thursday February 2, 2023.

AP

In this handout photo provided by the Command Public Information Office, Western Mindanao Command, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III, right, greets Western Mindanao Commander Lt. Gen. Roy Galido as he visits Camp Don Basilio Navarro in Zamboanga province, southern Philippines on Wednesday Feb. 1, 2023.

North Korea test-fired dozens of missiles in 2022, including potentially nuclear-capable ones designed to strike targets in South Korea and the U.S. mainland.

The U.S. resumed large-scale military drills last year, including an aerial exercise involving U.S. strategic bombers in November, in a stepped-up effort to deter Pyongyang. The allies had scaled back exercises in recent years to create room for diplomacy with North Korea during the Trump administration and because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Korea, in response, said it's prepared to counter U.S. military moves with the "most overwhelming nuclear force." It said the expansion of military exercises is pushing tensions to an "extreme red line."

JAPAN

Last month, the U.S. and Japan agreed to adjust the American troop presence on the island of Okinawa in part to enhance anti-ship capabilities that would be needed in the event of a Chinese incursion into Taiwan or other hostile acts in the South or East China sea.

They also added a formal mention of outer space in the longstanding U.S.-Japan security treaty, making clear that "attacks to, from and within space" could trigger the mutual defense provisions of the treaty. And Japan announced it would begin constructing a pair of runways on the small southern island of Mageshima where joint exercises, amphibious operations and missile interception could begin in about four years.

The island would be a hub for troop deployments and munition supplies in case of a conflict like a Taiwan emergency.

The changes in the U.S. deployment on Okinawa will transform the 12th Marine Regiment into a smaller, more rapidly mobile unit—the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment, which will be better equipped to fight an adversary and defend the U.S. and its allies in the region.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. opened an embassy in the Solomon Islands this week, in a direct effort to counter China's growing influence there. There had been an embassy in the Solomons for several years, but it was closed in 1993 as part of a global reduction in diplomatic posts. Over time, however, the U.S. became concerned about possible weakening ties with the country.

The Solomon Islands switched allegiance from the self-ruled island of Taiwan to Beijing in 2019. And last year, the Solomons signed a security pact with China, raising fears of a military buildup by Beijing in the region.

Reopening an embassy there, the U.S. State Department said, was a priority to counter China's growing influence in the region. The embassy in the capital, Honiara, is starting small, with a chargé d'affaires, a couple of State Department staff and a handful of local employees.

US opens embassy in Solomon Islands to counter China

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—The United States opened an embassy in the Solomon Islands on Thursday in its latest move to counter China's push into the Pacific.

The embassy in the capital, Honiara, is starting small, with a chargé d'affaires, a couple of State Department staff and a handful of local employees. The U.S. previously operated an embassy in the Solomon Islands for five years before closing it in 1993 as part of a global reduction in diplomatic posts after the end of the Cold War.

But China's bold moves in the region have the U.S. seeking to increase its engagement in a number of ways, such as by donating COVID-19 vaccines, bringing back Peace Corps volunteers to several island nations, and investing in forestry and tourism projects.

"The opening of the embassy builds on our efforts not only to place more diplomatic personnel throughout the region, but also to engage further with our Pacific neighbors, connect United States programs and resources with needs on the ground, and build people-to-people ties," said Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement.

The opening comes as Fiji's new leader, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, appears to be reassessing some aspects of his nation's engagement with China. Rabuka told The Fiji Times last week he planned to end a police training and exchange agreement with China.

The U.S. State Department notified lawmakers early last year that China's growing influence in the region made reopening the Solomon Islands embassy a priority. Since then, the Solomons has signed a security pact with China, raising fears of a military buildup in the region, and the U.S. has countered by sending several high-level delegations.

The Solomon Islands switched allegiance from the self-ruled island of Taiwan to Beijing in 2019, threatening the close ties with the U.S. that date to World War II.

"We are seeing this bond weaken as the People's Republic of China aggressively seeks to engage Solomon Islands' political and business elites, utilizing a familiar pattern of extravagant promises, prospective costly infrastructure loans, and potentially dangerous debt levels," the department said in a December notice to Congress that was obtained by The Associated Press.

A senior State Department official who insisted on anonymity to brief the media said the U.S. had been encouraged by the Solomon Islands' commitment to continue working with traditional security partners such as Australia and the U.S., but remained concerned about the secrecy surrounding the security agreement with China.

He said any type of militarization in the Pacific by China would be a great concern.

The official said the U.S. had yet to have deep conversations with the new Fijian leadership so it was too early to tell if the move on policing signaled a change in direction for Fiji on China.

The Fijian government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

U.S. EMBASSY HONIARA VIA AP

In this photo provided by the U.S. Embassy Honiara, Taylor Ruggles, director for the East Asia and the Pacific region of the U.S. State Department, from left, Colin Beck, permanent secretary of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and Russell Comeau, chargé d'affaires ad interim of the U.S. Embassy Honiara, attend an flag raising ceremony to celebrate the opening of the embassy in Honiara of the Solomon Islands, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023.

U.S. EMBASSY HONIARA VIA AP

In this photo provided by the U.S. Embassy Honiara, Taylor Ruggles, director for the East Asia and the Pacific region of the U.S. State Department, from left, Colin Beck, permanent secretary of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and Russell Comeau, chargé d'affaires ad interim of the U.S. Embassy Honiara, attend an flag raising ceremony to celebrate the opening of the embassy in Honiara of the Solomon Islands, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023.

U.S. EMBASSY HONIARA VIA AP

In this photo provided by the U.S. Embassy Honiara, Russell Comeau, chargé d'affaires ad interim of the U.S. Embassy Honiara, center, flanked by Taylor Ruggles, director for the East Asia and the Pacific region of the U.S. State Department, left, and Colin Beck, permanent secretary of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, gestures during a news conference in Honiara of the Solomon Islands, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023.

Hawaii whale dies with fishing nets, plastic bags in stomach

HONOLULU (AP)—A whale that washed ashore in Hawaii over the weekend likely died in part because it ate large volumes of fishing traps, fishing nets, plastic bags and other marine debris, scientists said Thursday, highlighting the threat to wildlife from the millions of tons of plastic that ends up in oceans every year.

The body of the 56-foot (17-meter) long, 120,000-pound (54,431-kilogram) animal was first noticed on a reef off Kauai on Friday. High tide brought it ashore on Saturday.

Kristi West, the director of the University of Hawaii's Health and Stranding Lab, said there were enough foreign objects in the opening of the whale's intestinal tract to block food.

"The presence of undigested fish and squid lends further evidence of a blockage," she said in a news release from the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources.

The whale's stomach contained six hagfish traps, seven types of fishing net, two types of plastic bags, a light protector, fishing line and a float from a net. Researchers also found squid beaks, fish skeleton and remains of other prey in the whale's stomach.

It's the first known case of a sperm whale in Hawaii waters ingesting discarded fishing gear, West said.

The whale's stomach was so large West's team wasn't able to examine it completely. They suspect there was more material they weren't able to recover.

Researchers found nothing wrong with other organs they examined. They collected samples to screen for disease and conduct other follow-up tests.

Sperm whales travel across thousands of miles in the ocean so it's not clear where the debris came from.

Scientists say that more than 35 million tons (31.9 million metric tons) of plastic pollution is produced around Earth each year and about a quarter of that ends up around the water.

AP

In this photo released by the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, a pair of excavators makes numerous attempts to free a whale from the shoreline and move it onto Lydgate Beach in Kauai County, Hawaii on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023.

AP

This photo released by the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources shows debris found in a dead

Marine debris harms numerous species.

Seabirds can ingest as much as 8% of their body weight in plastic. Endangered Hawaiian monk seals and green sea turtles can get caught in plastic nets and die. Sharks and other apex predators eat smaller fish that feed on microplastic, which can then endanger their own health.

In addition to eating plastics, large whales are harmed when they become entangled in fishing gear or other ropes in the ocean. The drag from debris can force whales to use more energy to swim and make it harder for them to eat, causing starvation.

On Tuesday, marine mammal responders freed a humpback whale that was caught in rope, a bundle of gear and two buoys off the Big Island.

Sperm whales are an endangered species found in deep oceans across the world. A 2021 report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimated there were about 4,500 sperm whales in the waters around the Hawaiian Islands, from the Big Island in the south to Kure Atoll in the north.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Seeing for ourselves: Press should be allowed access to migrant shelter facility

As the federal government has kept sitting on its hands in response to asylum seekers' immense needs, cities including New York have had to continue stepping up to provide basic humanitarian aid.

Most fraught has been housing thousands of people who have little in the way of existing community and social supports and who for months can't work legally in the country, leading the Adams administration to find creative yet occasionally questionable solutions like massive tent encampments for migrants. The latest facility is at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook, where men staying at the Watson Hotel makeshift shelter were supposed to be transferred this week.

Many of those who went have now left and tried to return to the hotel, citing lack of heat, privacy, security of belongings, and other concerns with the new facility. These are ultimately questions that could be resolved rather straightforwardly by reporters visiting the site and confirming whether or not any of the qualms are legit.

Yet reporters and elected officials have been blocked from entry, with guards keeping the public's eyes and ears at bay a good distance away, a move not well known to get reporters to back off. The administration contends that press visits can't be allowed due to privacy constraints. Yes, state law says that the confidentiality of all people receiving public assistance or social services shall be maintained, but an easy solution is just escorting the press in and forbidding photos of people's faces and no surnames allowed in interviews.

Members of the press visit prisons, hospitals, schools and other areas where vulnerable people expect some degree of privacy, and this is accomplished through agreed-upon ground rules that the media is happy to abide by, such as we did with the Randalls Island tent complex that served as a sort of precursor to this facility. Officials should know by now that "trust us" is not an acceptable answer. If these claims are all bad-faith fanning of flames, as the administration contends, that should be easy enough to disprove.

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The digital age is destroying the art of the letter

By LAURA WASHINGTON
Chicago Tribune

Laura Washington is a political commentator and longtime Chicago journalist.

A "Collection of Chicago Postal History," an assemblage of thousands of letters, will be auctioned in March by H.R. Harmer Fine Stamp Auctions of New York City.

Nearly all were originally mailed from Chicago. They were found and collected over decades by Leonard Piszkiewicz, a retiree and former Chicagoan now living in Northern California.

The letters resurrect Chicago history; some were sent more than 200 years ago, the Chicago Sun-Times reports. "About 200 items will be offered individually, with the rest divided into groups. Minimum starting bids are expected to range from about $50 to several thousand dollars," according to the article.

Let's buy them all. Letter writing is a dying art.

One piece of mail in the auction "features faded red fountain pen looping across an envelope mailed in 1833 from Chicago to Connecticut," the newspaper reported.

In the 1800s, letters "were often written on huge sheets, then folded many times into a little dense square. Sometimes, people wrote from left to right, then turned the page 90 degrees and wrote over what they'd already written," the article says.

Another item "came from Camp Douglas, a prison on what's now the South Side for Confederate soldiers captured during the Civil War. Living conditions could be brutal. By the end of the war, about 4,500 had died at the camp, according to the Encyclopedia of Chicago," according to the article.

A prisoner named William "writes about 7-foot-high snow drifts and 'extremely cold' weather, but also about a bountiful Christmas feast at the camp."

William wrote: "We had two turkeys, a quantity of sossage, dried beef, half dosen chickens and other things two numerous to mention."

Handwritten letters are relics, to be auctioned off to collectors who vainly try to keep the past alive. The art of letter writing, via pen and paper, is vanishing. Who will discover our stories, 200 years hence?

I am a professional scribe. I love to write, but I can't recall the last time I hand wrote—or received—a real letter.

The digital age is destroying the art of the letter. Our missives are conveyed through emails, tweets, texts, posts and videos. If we can't do it on our laptops or cellphones, we don't do it. We have forgotten the touch of paper, the dabs of ink that carry our love, joy, rage and intellect from finger to page.

The mail volume of the U.S. Postal Service reached a peak of around 213 billion units in 2006, according to consumer data firm Statista. The service "has experienced a year-on-year decline in mail volume every year since," Statista reports. "In 2022, the volume of mail delivered by the USPS dropped to just 127.3 billion units."

Most of that is machine-generated junk, begging you to buy this insurance policy, hire that real estate agent, contribute to a political campaign.

We have no time for writing on a page, no time to pause, reflect or linger on a word or phrase.

Long before the machines, I learned how to put pen to paper. The Catholic nuns who schooled me demanded good penmanship.

Young readers, do you know what a pen pal is? I had one, at 8 years old. I connected to Caren through an ad in the back of a comic book. She lived in the far western suburbs. I wrote to her from Chicago's South Side. We never met in person but formed a friendship via the U. S. mail.

I loved the floral smell of crisp stationery, fingering the paper watermark. The tart smell of the glue as the envelope sealed. Through handwritten letters, essays, reflections and tales, I built my confidence, skill and a writing career.

Letters are the reservoirs of our history. They can also change history. In April 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. penned his "Letter From Birmingham Jail."

King was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama, during his nonviolent protests against racism and racial segregation. Imprisoned under harsh conditions, he wrote a response to the racist overlords on the margins of a newspaper and other paper scraps that were smuggled to him.

"I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly," King wrote.

Famous or ordinary, letters tell us who we are. Soldiers writing their sweethearts and mothers from the front. A letter professing love or delivering a "Dear John" breakup. They reveal secrets, profess joy, announce a new birth, a death, a thank-you, a celebration.

Today, so many of us communicate those moments in quick jottings on social media.

My friend Stella Black holds tight to her letters. "I prefer handwritten notes and letters," she told me. She has long encouraged her daughter and granddaughters to do the same. "They have since they were old enough to even just write," she said.

"I also have a note written to my dad when his mom died in childbirth when she was very young. I cherish them."

My friend, a Chicago property tax consultant and activist, also collects vintage holiday postcards.

"I love all the messages on them. I started when I found my dad's Christmas postcard from his aunt. I put it on a small easel. Most of the handwriting is really beautiful because they took their time to write the notes," she said. "I have some over 100 years old."

I vow to return to the letter. The passing of CNMI founding father Edward DeLeon Guerrero Pangelinan

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The passing of CNMI founding father Edward DeLeon Guerrero Pangelinan

By JOSE S. DELA CRUZ
Special to the Saipan Tribune

The entire CNMI mourns the passing of one of the Commonwealth's most distinguished citizens and statesman—Edward DLG. Pangelinan. Eddie Pangelinan—as many of us fondly called him—was truly one of our most distinguished leaders. One of a handful of youngsters from the Northern Mariana Islands who, against all odds, decided to go to Guam in the mid-1950s in order to obtain a high school education and thereafter to attend college in Guam and, later, George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Ed Pangelinan was indeed one of the first to break the "glass ceiling" for students from the Northern Marianas in terms of obtaining a postsecondary education.

Continuing his quest to acquire a formal education, Ed Pangelinan was truly a visionary when he thereafter decided to go to law school. He applied to and was accepted at the Howard University Law School, again in Washington, D.C. As an alumnus of that distinguished law school, Ed joined an illustrious group of alumni, which includes the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris. But it was after law school and after obtaining his license to practice law in the late '60s that Ed's star truly began to shine brightly. The people of the then "Mariana Islands District" elected Ed (the first indigenous lawyer from the CNMI) to sit on the Senate of the newly established Congress of Micronesia.

Ed Pangelinan continued to distinguish himself with further accomplishments on behalf of the Northern Mariana Islands. For example, when the other political districts of Micronesia began their quest to become independent nations (but in close association with the United States), Ed and the leaders of the Mariana Islands District Legislature decided to advocate for the people of the Northern Marianas' longstanding quest to become a member of the American political family. Eventually, Ed and the leaders of the Northern Marianas succeeded in convincing the United States Representative to the Micronesian political status talks to also conduct separate political status talks with the leaders of the Northern Marianas, as they pursue their desire and dream to become a member of the American political family.

Ed was chosen by the Marianas Political Status Commission to serve as its chairman, with Marianas District Legislature President Vicente N. Santos as its co-chair. Composed of members of the community from both political parties, the Marianas Political Status Commission began separate political status discussions with Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the U.S. President's personal representative to the status talks.

With the assistance and guidance of their distinguished counsel, Howard Willens of the D.C. law firm of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, the Marianas Political Status Commission hammered out, over several years, with U.S. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams and his staff the terms of the Northern Marianas Covenant, through which our islands later became a "commonwealth of the United States" with the right to govern itself internally. Under the terms of the Covenant, the United States agreed not to exercise Congress' plenary power over the territories under the Territorial Clause of the U.S. Constitution, with respect to the Northern Mariana Island. As a result, the CNMI is the only "non-state" member of the American political family that is not under the so-called "plenary powers" of Congress. Unlike Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa, the CNMI is quite unique in this respect.

And who do we have to thank for as the architects of the terms and provisions of the Northern Marianas Covenant? Ed Pangelinan clearly, legislature president Ben Santos, and the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission. These people, under the leadership of Ed Pangelinan, formulated, drafted, and adopted the language of the Covenant, which is the legal basis today (and for the past 45 years) for CNMI self-government. The Northern Marianas Covenant is indeed the real and lasting legacy of Ed Pangelinan, a true CNMI visionary, doer and statesman. We, therefore, give homage to Ed for all the hard work and sacrifices that he made so that the people of the CNMI would enjoy the fruits of democracy and freedom. And we give him a final salute as he is laid to rest.

We sincerely thank his wife, Dulce, his children and his family for all the work and sacrifices that Ed undertook so that our islands could become a member of the American political family

Jose S. Dela Cruz is a former chief justice of the CNMI Supreme Court.

Free COVID care will be gone soon. Should you worry?

By LISA JARVIS
Bloomberg Opinion

Lisa Jarvis is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering biotech, health care and the pharmaceutical industry. Previously, she was executive editor of* Chemical & Engineering News.

On May 11, the COVID-19 public health emergency officially comes to a close in the U.S., and with it comes an end to largely free access to all related healthcare. House Republicans might want to declare it over this instant, but a cushion is needed—and this one might not even be enough—to ensure everyone from insurers to drug companies to each of us knows what the unwinding means.

The transition timing is sensible. Thanks largely to vaccines, tests and treatments, COVID is no longer overwhelming hospitals (even as it continues to kill thousands each week). Millions of people will continue to get sick each year, with some portion of those needing treatment. And many of us—though unless we develop better vaccines, nowhere near as many as in 2021—will want whatever booster comes next. The question is how easily each of us will access those interventions after May 11.

The answer comes down to a choose-your-own-adventure based on insurance status—one that ends with less happy outcomes for some versus others. The complexity of how various people will be able to access and pay for care could lead to a rather clunky transition after three years of a single plan: free vaccines, drugs, and treatment for all.

The people most directly impacted will be the uninsured and those who treat them, says Lindsay F. Wiley, a professor of law and Faculty Director of the Health Law and Policy Program at the UCLA School of Law. The public health emergency declaration included provisions that allowed hospitals and healthcare providers to seek reimbursement through Medicaid after treating uninsured people for COVID. Now, "that reverts to our ordinary, inequitable, really poor healthcare system," Wiley told me. In other words, uninsured patients will be on the hook for those costs.

For some, the new reality hit when federal funding for the program began to dry up last spring. Now, the number of uninsured people could grow by the millions as pandemic-era provisions that ensured continuous enrollment in Medicaid lapse, albeit on a timeline no longer tethered to the emergency declaration.

People with Medicare and Medicaid, meanwhile, will still be eligible for free vaccines, but will likely share the cost of treatments like Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid, Merck & Co.'s Molnupiravir, and Gilead Sciences Inc.'s Remdesivir, and, eventually, tests.

For people with private insurance, COVID prevention and treatment will generally be covered like any other infectious disease, with some nuances. Vaccines, like other preventive care, should be fully covered, but the ending of the PHE means it will now matter where you get it. Under the PHE, the appointment and the shot itself were both free whether you stayed within your insurer's network or not. Now, you're going to want to be sure the provider is in-network, or risk an unexpected bill.

If you get sick, you'll likely have to jump through the same insurance hoops as with other care. Insurers and drug companies will be setting treatment costs, rather than the government, explains Amesh Adalja, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. "It's going back to the norm."

Another nuance worth noting: Private insurers will no longer be required to pay for eight at-home tests per person, per month, and it's unclear how they'll approach covering those once the PHE ends. "One of the challenges is that our healthcare financing system isn't really set up with public health benefits in mind," Wiley says. If you're at low risk for a serious case of COVID, your main purpose in taking a test is to ensure you don't spread the virus around—in other words, the benefits of that test largely accrue to society, not your insurance company.

Insurers might decide it isn't worthwhile to cover at-home tests, or at least not for anyone who isn't at risk of severe disease. And if people are paying out of pocket, it's hard to imagine families will use as many. Even pegged to the $12 per test that the government currently covers, costs will add up. That could be another implication of the end of the PHE: We simply won't feel as motivated to test, which could in turn increase community spread.

Full approval for Paxlovid or any future COVID antiviral pills, which are only useful if people know they have COVID, might alter that scenario. Because Paxlovid is currently available under so-called "emergency use authorization," a status that will remain after the PHE ends, Pfizer can't market the drug. But once it has full approval and can, it would seem prudent for the company to find a way to ensure everyone has access to affordable testing to maximize the drug's uptake.

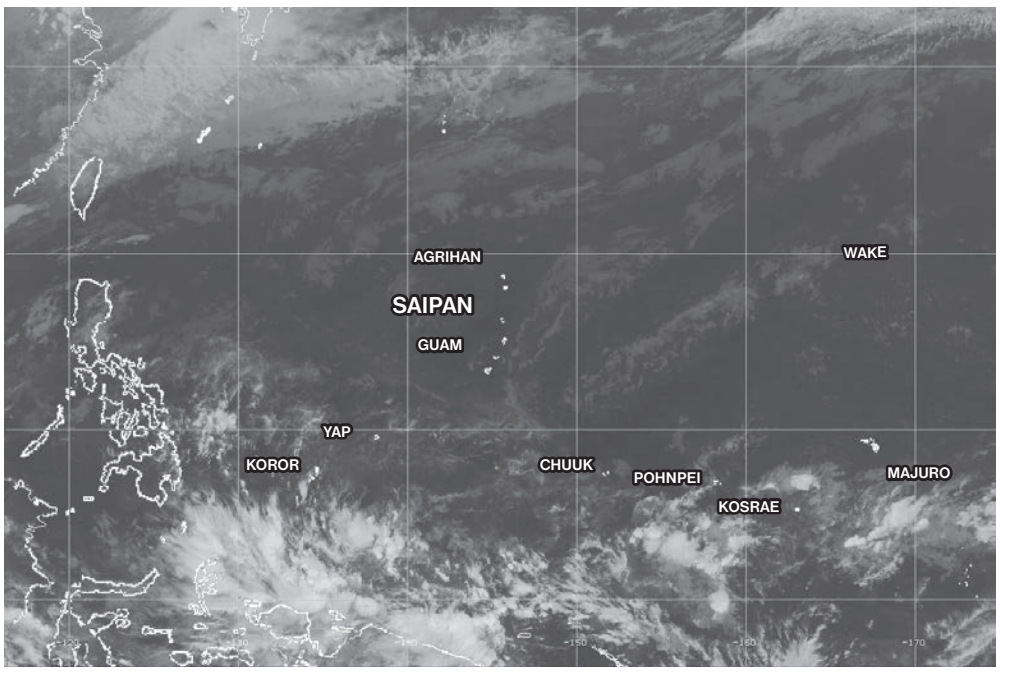
Navigating this new world order, one where COVID is treated like any other infectious disease, is sure to have hiccups. Fortunately, not all the PHE benefits will go away at the same time: services such as telehealth for everything from cancer care to therapy appointments are in some cases not tied to the ending of the emergency. And some have been made permanent, for example, virtual visits with a mental health provider are now covered for people with Medicare.If healthcare providers, insurers, and companies use the runway left to smooth out questions around coverage and embrace the need to contain community spread, we can hope it all amounts to a softer landing for patients.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
86º / 76º	86º / 76º	84º / 77º	87º / 77º	87º / 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:21 AM,MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate trades prevail in the Marianas. Satellite imagery and Doppler radar indicate fast-moving sprinkles across Rota`s coastal waters. Buoys show seas are between 7 and 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Sunny	77° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	45° / 25°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	70° / 64°
Honolulu	Windy	77° / 66°
London	Cloudy	52° / 50°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	75° / 47°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	66° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 74°
New York	Rain	61° / 46°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	48° / 37°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	46° / 37°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	52° / 37°
Rome	Sunny	55° / 34°
Salem	Showers	74° / 44°
San Francisco	Sunny	61° / 45°
Seoul	Showers	43° / 27°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 36°
Washington, DC	Rain	60° / 44°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:44 AM	6:17 PM
Wednesday	6:44 AM	6:17 PM
Thursday	6:44 AM	6:18 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	6:18 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	6:19 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:43 AM	7:31 PM
Wednesday	-	8:19 AM	8:19 PM
Thursday	-	8:53 AM	9:06 PM
Friday	-	9:28 AM	9:54 PM
Saturday	-	10:03 AM	10:43 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
2:48 AM	Low Tide	-0.30
9:39 AM	High Tide	1.62
3:11 PM	Low Tide	0.91
8:10 PM	High Tide	1.65

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Spa Ocean opens in Chalan Kanoa

By MARK RABAGO
MARK_RABAGO@SAIPANTRIBUNE.COM
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A new massage shop has opened in Chalan Kanoa that offers an invigorating and lush full body massage experience. Spa Ocean opened only last Jan. 25 and is slowly making a name for itself because of its unique massage offerings.

For instance, its Full Body Care A package is the Cadillac of all massages as it comes with foot sauna, body scrub, full body massage, and facial massage. It costs $75 for a 90-minute treatment and $100 for two hours.

Spa Ocean also offers a 90-minute Shiatsu/Aroma Massage that includes foot sauna, full body massage, and facial massage for $50.

Other massages offered at Spa Ocean are hot stone massage, facial deep care, foot massage, among others.

They also have an in-house sauna and soon will also be offering manicures, pedicures, eyelash extensions, and more.

Staff Maureen Aguon said Spa Ocean owners opened the business after the waning of COVID-19 restrictions encouraged them that it's safe to offer massages again on island.

"Although we still have this pandemic going on, over the months it hasn't been as bad as before and so I think opening a spa is not a bad thing to do. In fact we still continue our social distancing and sanitize our rooms after every use. We care about our customers' safety as well as we do ourselves."

As for what makes Spa Ocean different from other massage parlors on island, Aguon said aside from their premium massage offerings they also use only top-tier products for their customers.

"With all our facial massages we use one of the best Korean products. We will also have a Valentine's Day promo coming up, we'll have more information on that by Feb. 11, 2023," she said.

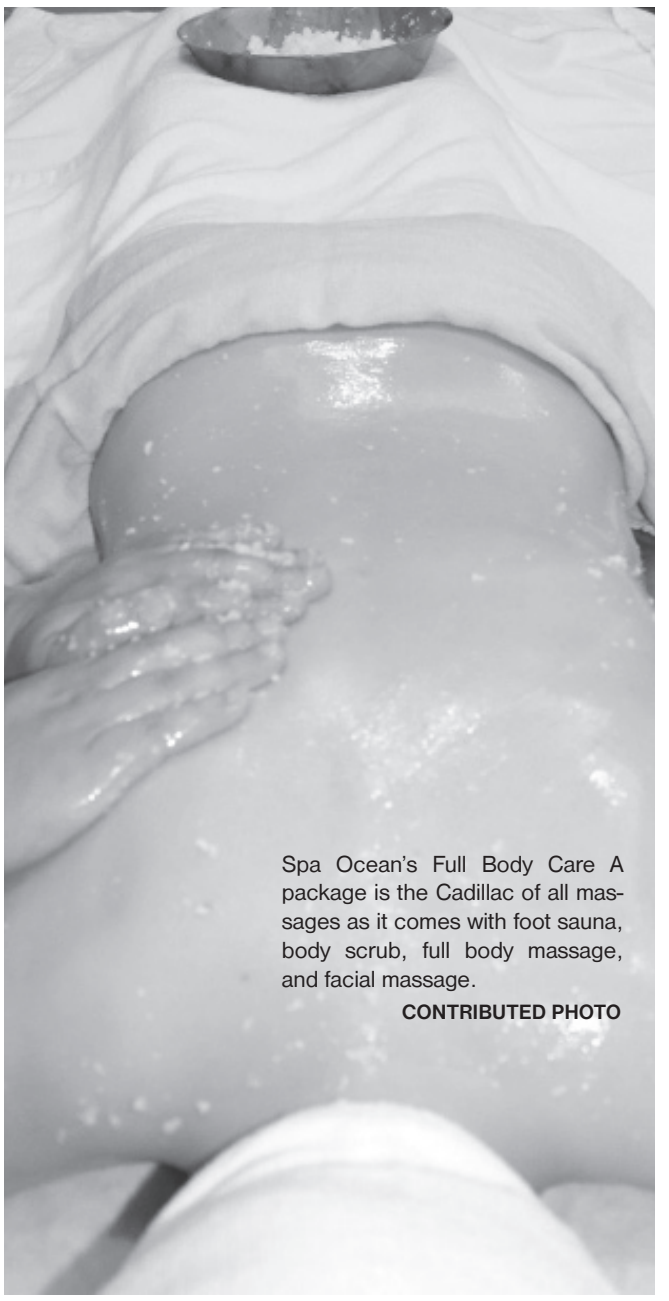
Spa Ocean is located at Surfrider's Hotel, right next to Great Harvest Bread Co. in Chalan Kanoa.

It has four massage rooms—three rooms with two beds and a room with four beds. It can accommodate 10 people at the same time.

Spa Ocean is open from 11am to 11pm, Monday-Sunday. For more information or to make an appointment, call (670) 235-7000 or (670)287-9009 and they can also be reached through their Facebook page: Spa Ocean.

Spa Ocean is located at Surfrider's Hotel, right next to Great Harvest Bread Co. in Chalan Kanoa. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Spa Ocean uses only top-tier products for their customers. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Spa Ocean's Full Body Care A package is the Cadillac of all massages as it comes with foot sauna, body scrub, full body massage, and facial massage. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

US tells car owners to park old Hondas until air bag issues are fixed

DETROIT (AP)—Honda and the U.S. government are urging owners of about 8,200 older vehicles not to drive them until dangerous air bag inflators are replaced.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on Friday issued a "Do Not Drive" advisory for the 2001 through 2003 vehicles with Takata inflators that have a high possibility of exploding and hurling shrapnel in a crash.

The safety agency says the risk to drivers and passengers is dire because the so-called "Alpha" inflators have a 50% chance of exploding in a crash. If the inflators blow apart, they can shoot shrapnel toward a driver's face that could kill them or cause serious injuries.

The agency says the Honda and Acura vehicles were recalled previously but records show that repairs have not been made in the affected vehicles. Honda already has replaced 99% of the dangerous inflators.

Vehicles affected include the 2001 and 2002 Honda Accord and Civic, the 2002Honda CR-V and Odyssey SUVs, the 2003 Honda Pilot, the 2002 and 2003 Acura 3.2 TL and the 2003 Acura 3.2 CL.

Owners can check to see if their cars are covered by going to https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls and keying in their 17-digit vehicle identification number.

"These inflators are two decades old now, and they pose a 50% chance of rupturing in even a minor crash," NHTSA Acting Administrator Ann Carlson said in a statement. "Don't gamble with your life or the life of someone you love – schedule your free repair today before it's too late."

Takata used ammonium nitrate to create a small explosion to inflate air bags in a crash. But the chemical can become more volatile over time when exposed to moisture in the air and repeated high temperatures. The explosion can rupture a metal canister and hurl shrapnel into the passenger compartment.

Since 2009, the exploding air bags have killed at least 33 people worldwide, including 24 in the United States.

Europe bans Russian diesel, other oil products over Ukraine

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—Europe imposed a ban Sunday on Russian diesel fuel and other refined oil products, slashing energy dependency on Moscow and seeking to further crimp the Kremlin's fossil fuel earnings as punishment for invading Ukraine.

The ban comes along with a price cap agreed by the Group of Seven allied democracies. The goal is allowing Russian diesel to keep flowing to countries like China and India and avoiding a sudden price rise that would hurt consumers worldwide, while reducing the profits funding Moscow's budget and war.

Diesel is key for the economy because it is used to power cars, trucks carrying goods, farm equipment and factory machinery. Diesel prices have been elevated due to recovering demand after the COVID-19 pandemic and limits on refining capacity, contributing to inflation for other goods worldwide.

The new sanctions create uncertainty about prices as the 27-nation European Union finds new supplies of diesel from the U.S., Middle East and India to replace those from Russia, which at one point delivered 10% of Europe's total diesel needs. Those are longer journeys than from Russia's ports, stretching available tankers.

Prices also could be driven up by reviving demand from China as the economy rebounds after the end of draconian COVID-19 restrictions.

The price cap of $100 per barrel for diesel, jet fuel and gasoline is to be enforced by barring insurance and shipping services from handling diesel priced over the limit. Most of those companies are located in Western countries.

It follows a $60-per-barrel cap on Russian crude that took effect in December and is supposed to work the same way. Both the diesel and oil caps could be tightened later.

"Once we have these price caps set, we can squeeze the Russian price and deny them, deny (President Vladimir) Putin money for his war without a price spike that's going to hurt Western economies and developing economies," said Thomas O'Donnell, a global fellow with the Washington-based Wilson Center.

The diesel price cap will not bite immediately because it was set at about what Russian diesel trades for. Russia's chief problem now will be finding new customers, not evading the price ceiling. However, the cap aims to prevent Russian gains from any sudden price spikes in refined oil products.

Analysts say there might be a price bump initially as markets sort out the changes. But they say the embargo should not cause a price spike if the cap works as intended and Russian diesel keeps flowing to other countries.

Diesel fuel at the pump has been flat since the start of December, costing 1.80 euros per liter ($7.37 per gallon) as of Jan. 30, according to the weekly oil market report issued by the European Union's executive commission. Pump prices in Germany, the EU's largest economy, fell 2.6 cents to 1.83 euros per liter ($7.48 per gallon) as of Jan. 31.

The ban provides for a 55-day grace period for diesel loaded on tankers before Sunday, a step aimed at avoiding ruffling markets. European Union officials say importers have had time to adjust since the ban was announced in June.

Russia earned more than $2 billion from diesel sales to Europe in December alone as importers appear to have stocked up with added purchases ahead of the ban.

Europe has already banned Russian coal and most crude oil, while Moscow has cut off most shipments of natural gas.

Nation

AP

President Joe Biden speaks with members of the press after stepping off Air Force One at Hagerstown Regional Airport in Hagerstown, Md., Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, en route to Camp David for the weekend.

Balloon bickering over Biden's actions, China's intentions

WASHINGTON (AP)—Republican lawmakers on Sunday accused China of deliberately surveilling sensitive U.S. military sites with a suspected spy balloon and said the Biden administration had given Beijing an intelligence opening by not downing the balloon during its high-altitude drift through American airspace.The balloon's presence in the sky above the United States before a military jet shot it down over the Atlantic Ocean with a missile Saturday further strained U.S.-China ties. America's top diplomat abruptly scrapped a trip to Beijing and China's defense ministry said in a statement after the balloon fell into the waters off the Carolina coast that it "reserves the right to take necessary measures to deal with similar situations.""Clearly this was an attempt by China to gather information, to defeat our command and control of our sensitive missile defense and nuclear weapon sites," said the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, among the members of Congress on the Sunday news shows. "And that certainly is an urgency that this administration does not recognize."U.S. defense and military officials said the balloon entered the U.S. air defense zone north of the Aleutian Islands on Jan. 28 and moved largely over land across Alaska and then into Canadian airspace in the Northwest Territories on Monday. It crossed back into U.S. territory over northern Idaho on Tuesday, the day the White House said President Joe Biden was first briefed on it."It defies belief to suggest there was nowhere" between Alaska and the Carolinas where the U.S. could have safely shot down the balloon, said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said the full Senate will get a briefing next week on the balloon, including details about its surveillance capabilities, and that the administration is considering measures against the Chinese for "their brazen activities." He said the GOP criticism was political and premature, and that the U.S. had "sent a clear message to China that this is not acceptable."Biden issued the shootdown order but had wanted it to happen earlier, on Wednesday. He was advised that the best time for the operation would be when it was over water, U.S. officials said. Military officials determined that bringing down the balloon over land from an altitude of 60,000 feet would pose an undue risk to people on the ground."The message they (the Chinese) were trying to send is what they believe internally, and that is that the United States is a once great superpower that's hollowed out, that's in decline," said Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "And the message they're trying to send the world is, 'Look, these guys can't even do anything about a balloon flying over U.S. airspace. How can you possibly count on them if something were to happen in the Indo-Pacific region?'"By Wednesday the balloon was over Montana, home to Malmstrom Air Force Base, which has fields of nuclear missile silos.

US states take control of abortion debate with funding focus

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP)—Though the Insight Women's Center sits at the epicenter of a reinvigorated battle in the nation's culture wars, the only hint of its faith-based mission to dissuade people from getting abortions is the jazzy, piano rendition of "Jesus Loves Me" playing in a waiting room.The Republican-controlled Kansas Legislature is considering allocating millions of dollars in state funds to similar anti-abortion centers that persuade people to bring their pregnancies to term by offering free pregnancy tests and sonograms, as well as counseling and parenting classes taught by volunteers. They're also considering offering millions more in income tax credits for donors supporting what they call "crisis pregnancy centers."When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last year and gave control of abortion policy to the states, it led to bans and restrictions in some states, and executive orders and laws protecting access in others. Those debates continue, but perhaps less noticed is how this change refueled the renewed battle over taxpayer money.Supporters say the effort shows abortion opponents are addressing families' social and financial needs. But critics say the amount of new funding proposed for organizations like Insight — either in direct funding or tax credits for their donors — fall far short of what's necessary to improve people's access to health care and address ongoing poverty."You funnel money through a short-term solution that makes it appear as though you are doing something," said Alesha Doan, a University of Kansas associate professor who has studied and written books about abortion politics.Increasingly, liberal cities and states are funding access to abortion, including telemedicine, which has seen a notable rise with more than half of U.S. abortions now done with pills rather than surgery. Meanwhile, states with GOP legislatures and governors are looking to put more taxpayer money into organizations that talk people out of ending their pregnancies. Legislative committees held hearings Thursday on proposals for a 70% income tax credit to donors who support anti-abortion centers, with a cap of $10 million in total credits.

ACROSS THE NATION

Evacuations urged in Ohio town as train wreck smolders

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio (AP)—A smoldering tangle of dozens of derailed freight cars, some carrying hazardous materials, has kept an evacuation order in effect in Ohio near the Pennsylvania state line as environmental authorities warily watch air quality monitors. About 50 cars derailed in East Palestine at about 9 p.m. Friday as a train was carrying a variety of products from Madison, Illinois, to Conway, Pennsylvania, rail operator Norfolk Southern said. No injuries to crew, residents or first responders have been reported. East Palestine officials said Sunday that emergency responders were monitoring but keeping their distance from the fire, saying remediation efforts could not begin as long as the cars smoldered. The evacuation covers a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) radius, officials said.

Ride at Iowa amusement park where boy died will never reopen

ALTOONA, Iowa (AP)—The ride at an Iowa amusement park where an 11-year-old boy was killed in 2021 will never reopen, the park's owners said. Bill Lentz, Adventureland's general manager, said in a letter posted on the park's website Friday that after spending months reviewing the safety of the Raging River ride, officials decided to close it permanently. "The decision comes after months of examination of the ride, working closely with its manufacturer to identify what enhancements each would need to meet our operating standards," Lentz said in the statement. "Based upon that review, the best path forward is to close Raging River, and focus on enhancing the Adventureland experience elsewhere." Michael Jaramillo died and his brother and father were injured on July 3, 2021, after their raft overturned and trapped them in the water. The ride uses a conveyor belt to move large circular rafts through rapids.

Teen fatally shot at fair in Florida county known for rodeos

ARCADIA, Fla. (AP)—A teenager was fatally shot at a county fair in a rural part of Florida known for its annual rodeos, authorities said Sunday. The Arcadia Police Department said in a statement that the shooting of the 17-year-old boy at the DeSoto County Fair on Saturday appeared to be an isolated incident and there was no further threat to the public.

Asia

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd James Austin III, right, shake hands with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during a courtesy call at the Malacanang Palace in Manila, Philippines on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023. AP

'A big deal': US, PH tighten military ties

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines said Thursday it was allowing U.S. forces to broaden their footprint in the Southeast Asian nation, the latest Biden administration move strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan.Thursday's agreement, which gives U.S. forces access to four more military camps, was announced during a visit by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. He has led efforts to reinforce regional security partnerships and update the arming and positioning of American and allied forces in Asia in the face of China's increasing military strength and its assertiveness regarding its claims to Taiwan and in the South China Sea."It's a big deal," Austin said at a news conference, while noting the agreement did not mean the reestablishment of permanent American bases in the Philippines.In a televised news conference with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr., Austin gave assurances of U.S. military support and said the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, which obligates the U.S. and the Philippines to help defend each other in major conflicts, "applies to armed attacks on either of our armed forces, public vessels or aircraft anywhere in the South China Sea.""We discussed concrete actions to address destabilizing activities in the waters," Austin said. "This is part of our effort to modernize our alliance, and these efforts are especially important as the People's Republic of China continues to advance its illegitimate claims in the West Philippine Sea."American leaders have long sought to reorient U.S. foreign policy to better reflect the rise of China as a significant military and economic competitor, as well as to better deal with the lasting threat from North Korea. The tensions between China and Taiwan will be high on the agenda next week when U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to meet with China's new foreign minister, Qin Gang.China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory — to be taken by force if necessary. Beijing responded to then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan last summer by sending warships, bombers, fighter jets and support aircraft into airspace near the island on a near-daily basis, sparking concerns of a potential blockade or military action.

The announcement from the Philippines follows Austin's announcement with South Korean leaders Tuesday that the U.S. would be sending more fighter jets and bombers, and his Jan. 11 declaration with Japanese counterparts that the U.S. would be shifting its deployment there to make for a more nimble fighting force.

ASIAN BRIEFS

9 missing after fishing boat capsizes in South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korean coast guard vessels and aircraft on Sunday were searching for nine fishermen who disappeared after their boat capsized off the country's southwestern coast. The coast guard from the southwestern port city of Mokpo said that three crew members were rescued by a nearby commercial vessel following the accident late Saturday near Daebichi Island in the sea county of Sinan. Survivors said the boat's engine room had quickly filled with water before the 24-ton vessel tipped over, according to the coast guard. Officials were planning to salvage the boat, but it wasn't known whether the nine missing crew members would be inside. The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said seven of the missing were South Korean nationals and the two others were foreigners, but it didn't immediately confirm their nationalities.

Japanese prime minister's aide leaving over LGBTQ remarks

TOKYO (AP)—A senior aide to Japan's prime minister is being dismissed after making discriminatory remarks about LGBTQ people. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters Saturday that Masayoshi Arai, a secretary at his office, was being dismissed after Arai recently told Japanese media he did not like seeing LGBTQ people. Arai had retracted his comments and apologized on Friday. Kishida said the remarks run counter to the administration's position on promoting diversity. "Taking strong action is inevitable," Kishida said without providing further details, meaning Arai may leave voluntarily. Arai's remarks prompted an outburst of protest and were the latest in a string of gaffes by Japanese officials that have landed them in trouble. Saving face is important in conformist Japan, where prejudice against LGBTQ people, racial groups, women and other nationalities persist. Japan is the only Group of Seven country that does not recognize same-sex marriage, but the movement toward recognition has been growing.

World

Ukraine defense minister expects help from West on military planes

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukraine's defense minister expressed confidence Sunday that Western allies would agree to the country's latest weapons request—warplanes to fight off Russian forces that invaded nearly a year ago.Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told a news conference in Kyiv that Ukraine has already received everything from its "wish list to Santa," except planes."There will be planes, too," Reznikov predicted. "The question is just what kind exactly.... Consider that this mission is already completed."So far, Ukraine has won support from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets. But several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could provoke the Kremlin and draw their countries deeper into the conflict, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and wreaked massive destruction.Kyiv says such jets are essential to challenging Russia's air superiority and ensuring success in a Russian offensive that Reznikov predicted could begin around the war's one-year anniversary, Feb. 24."Not all Western weapons will arrive by then, but we have the resources and reserves to help stabilize and sustain the offensive," Reznikov told reporters. Since the war began, Western leaders have balked at some of Ukraine's requests, such as for longer-range missiles and tanks, only to agree later. The warplanes are the latest example.Ukraine has relocated its warplanes and concealed air defense assets, hampering Moscow's efforts to gain full control of the skies. After suffering early losses, the Russian air force has avoided venturing deep into Ukraine's airspace and mostly focused on close front line support.German-made tanks are on the way to Ukraine. Reznikov said his forces would begin training on Leopard tanks in Europe on Monday, before their delivery to Ukraine. So far, Canada, Poland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States have announced they will supply tanks to Ukraine. The Kremlin has said Western countries' supply of increasingly sophisticated and more weapons will only prolong the conflict, and it has characterized NATO as a direct participant. Reznikov, commenting on the supply of Western weapons and the state of the Ukrainian army, took the rhetoric further on Sunday, telling reporters: "I absolutely boldly claim that we have become a de facto NATO country. We only have a de jure part left."Ukraine has applied to join NATO, as have two of Russia's other neighbors, Finland and Sweden.

On the battlefield, Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said four people were injured Sunday when a Russian S-300 missile fell near an apartment block in Kharkiv city, and another was hurt when a missile hit a university building. Video showed the building hit was the National Academy for Urban Economy, about 700 meters from the city's central square.Meanwhile, heavy fighting continued in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, one of four regions that Russia illegally annexed last year even though its forces do not fully control the area. Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said five civilians were wounded in rocket attacks during the night in the city of Druzhkivka and that the town of Avdiivka and its outskirts were also fired on.In the Donetsk city of Bakhmut, the epicenter of the fiercest fighting in Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said Sunday it had repelled Russian attacks.

Pope, Anglican, Presbyterian leaders denounce anti-gay laws

ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE (AP)—Pope Francis, the head of the Anglican Communion and top Presbyterian minister together denounced the criminalization of homosexuality on Sunday and said gay people should be welcomed by their churches.The three Christian leaders spoke out on LGBTQ rights during an unprecedented joint airborne news conference returning home from South Sudan, where they took part in a three-day ecumenical pilgrimage to try to nudge the young country's peace process forward.They were asked about Francis' recent comments to The Associated Press, in which he declared that laws that criminalize gay people were "unjust" and that "being homosexual is not a crime."South Sudan is one of 67 countries that criminalizes homosexuality, 11 of them with the death penalty. LGBTQ advocates say even where such laws are not applied, they contribute to a climate of harassment, discrimination and violence.Francis referred his Jan. 24 comments to the AP and repeated that such laws are "unjust." He also repeated previous comments that parents should never throw their gay children out of the house."To condemn someone like this is a sin," he said. "Criminalizing people with homosexual tendencies is an injustice.""People with homosexual tendencies are children of God. God Loves them. God accompanies them," he added.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recalled that LGBTQ rights were very much on the current agenda of the Church of England, and said he would quote the pope's own words when the issue is discussed at the church's upcoming General Synod."I wish I had spoken as eloquently and clearly as the pope. I entirely agree with every word he said," Welby said.Recently, the Church of England decided to allow blessings for same-sex civil marriages but said same-sex couples could not marry in its churches. The Vatican forbids both gay marriage and blessings for same-sex unions.Welby told reporters that the issue of criminalization had been taken up at two previous Lambeth Conferences of the broader Anglican Communion, which includes churches in Africa and the Middle East where such anti-gay laws are most common and often enjoy support by conservative bishops.The broader Lambeth Conference has come out twice opposing criminalization, "But it has not really changed many people's minds," Welby said. The Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields, the Presbyterian moderator of the Church of Scotland who also participated in the pilgrimage and news conference, offered an observation."There is nowhere in my reading of the four Gospels where I see Jesus turning anyone away," he said.

Overdrive

TrailSport takes Honda Pilot to higher ground

The 2023 Honda Pilot an excellent three-row SUV.
HONDA/TNS

NUTS & BOLTS

2023 Honda Pilot TrailSport
Price: $37,245
- Power: 285 horsepower, 262 pound-feet torque
- Transmission: 10-speed automatic
- Performance: 0-60 mph
- Weight: 4,035-4,685 pounds
- Fuel economy: EPA est. mpg 19 city
- Highs: Upscale styling inside and out; real off-road dexterity
- Lows: Miss the old sliding console door; head-up display only

By HENRY PAYNE
THE DETROIT NEWS

The Honda Pilot is an excellent three-row SUV to drop the kids off at school or take them up Broken Arrow mountain trail to 4,200 feet for one the most breathtaking views in America.

Oh, I'm not kidding.

Broken Arrow is a bucket list item for anyone who enjoys the American West. It's the exclusive territory of Sedona-based Pink Jeep Tours that load families into three-row, battle-hardened Wranglers that crawl three miles over tortuous red mud and slippery rock to the trail's grand finale: Chicken Point. Ooooh.

If you dare, you can take your own Jeep Wrangler or 4x4 or side-by-side and join the Pink Jeeps nearly a mile up on Chicken Point. Above you are some of the West's most famous rock formations: the Two Sisters, Madonna and Child, Chapel Butte. Below you: the red abyss. It's as heavenly as the names suggest.

I've made the trek twice in Pink Jeeps in recent years. Pals have conquered it in their own Wrangler Rubicons. I hadn't seen anything but truck-based 4x4s or side-by-sides ... until this January.

With all-wheel drive and all-terrain tires, the 2023 Honda Pilot TrailSport can scramble up slippery rocks on the Sedona trails.

My Pilot TrailSport tester made quite a sight next to these off-road bruisers. A side-by-side driver waggled a Hang Loose! sign at me. Pink Jeep pilots stared like Porsche drivers at Waterford Hills Raceway upon seeing, well, a Pilot doing hot laps.

Track-focused performance cars are a common sight. Pilot TrailSport is the intersection of production and performance, but aimed at off-roading. It's a growing trend as Americans have gone bonkers for sport utes. TrailSport joins an elite list of three-row SUVs (Ford Explorer Timberline, Kia Telluride X-Pro) hardened with off-road essentials—all-terrain tires, skid plates, all-wheel drive and lifted suspension.

WHUMP! Pilot's front skid plate took a hit as I descended Broken Arrow. The chassis was unscathed and I kept on muddin'.

Got skid plates? A display of the twin skid plates standard on a 2023 Honda Pilot TrailSport to protect the underbelly from off-road harm.

Sure, take that Pink Jeep tour when in Sedona. It's awesome. But if you're a Michiganian who likes to winter in Arizona, you can return time and again in the TrailSport for a fried chicken picnic on Chicken Point. Ditto if you live in Metro Detroit. Go to Detroit 4fest at Holly Oaks and get a ride aboard an earth-chewing Bronco. Then bring the family back there in the TrailSport with its sure-footed tires and tough underbelly.

Honda built the '23 Pilot new from the ground up with off-roading in mind. But also because the three-row SUV segment has become brutally competitive.

Over its four generations, Pilot has had to compete against King Explorer (which invented the segment) and formidable Toyota Highlander. But the three-row shark tank has grown with predators like the gorgeous Kia Telluride, sci-fi Hyundai Palisade, athletic Mazda CX-9 (and coming CX-90). Even the Nissan Pathfinder awoke from its slumber and was remade with handsome looks and endless interior room.

Like the rest of the 2023 Honda Pilot, the rear gets a complete makeover with big, blocky taillamps connected by a horizontal bar emblazoned with PILOT.

In short, this is a segment that new requires character as well as competence.

Continuous improvement

Pilot has always had bucketfulls of the latter. The third-gen Pilot was an ergonomic marvel with its sliding console door—Whoa! It can swallow a purse whole!—and second-row seats that would collapse forward—Zounds! With the push of a single button!—for easy third-row access. From the Fit's magic seats to the Civic's multi-purpose console to the Pilot, Honda has never lacked in a intuitive understanding of what makes interiors more livable. But ... as our friends at Car and Driver bluntly put it, the last-gen model "looks like a lifted minivan." Ouch.

The next-gen required an emotional connection. Starting with the 2021 Civic, Honda isn't just remodeling the home with the latest appliances; it's brought in an interior designer.

The redesigned Pilot continues a theme across the Pilot lineup—including the Civic, HR-V and CR-V—of updating core models with style and performance improvements.

Pilot follows the Civic, HR-V, CR-V (and forthcoming Accord) with a handsome, more chiseled exterior and interior to match. Upright, squared-off grille. Slit LED headlights, muscular shoulders outside. Crisp interior switches, tablet dash screen, digital dials inside.

The ergonomic genius is still here: one-touch collapse second-row seats, bigger cupholders to hold tall Thermoses, sub-floor rear cargo room, space-saving "trigger shifter," 2.4 more inches of second-row legroom. The touchscreen is complemented by (starting with the most popular EX-L trim at $43K) wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, wireless charging (so phones don't run out of juice while navigating) and standard adaptive cruise control.

MOTORMOUTH: Alternative to spare tire?

By BOB WEBER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Q: Several weeks ago, I wrote you concerning the lack of spare tires in new vans. I purchased a 2019 Pacifica. During the last couple of months, I have visited several auto parts stores looking for "canned flat tire sealer" to carry in the van. Is this a good alternative to have in the van in case of a flat? Would you have any recommendations as to brand or type? Would have any other suggestions for this situation.

E.Z., Chicago

A: Your van comes with a space saver spare tire. If your regular tire has a slow leak, you may not need the spare right away. Aerosol tire sealer/inflator products do work—temporarily. I can't vouch for a particular brand. Just be sure you choose a product stating that it is safe for tire pressure monitor systems (TPMS).

■■■

Q: My daughter's BSW system in her 2017 Hyundai Tucson stopped working recently for no reason. What would be the best and most economical option to have checked for a solution to have repaired: dealer, independent garage, body shop, other? Love your column, very informative.

P.R., Evergreen Park, Illinois

A: The first option is to use the vehicle's setup functions found in the touch screen system. There are a number of steps to reach the blind spot warning (BSW) setup, but once there you may toggle the warning system on or off. Although your owner's manual may have the information, I discovered a couple YouTube videos that may be more helpful. Do a little surfing.

■■■

Q: I agree with your sentiment on handicapped parking in this week's Hartford Courant. Some years ago, I saw a sign below the (ubiquitous) wheelchair sign that read: "If you are not handicapped when you park here, you will be before you leave!" Still cracks me up!

K.D., East Haddam, Connecticut

A: Ouch!

■■■

Q: Why do drivers—mostly men who drive pickups and large SUVs—back into the parking space in parking lots? My observation is usually in grocery store, big box or shopping mall parking lots. During this process, they block the entire roadway between the rows of cars while they attempt to maneuver their large vehicle into the parking space. It seems much more efficient and less time consuming to drive your vehicle face forward into the parking space.

MOTORMOUTH
By BOB WEBER
Chicago Tribune

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to Motormouth, Rides, Chicago Tribune, 160 N. Stetson Ave., Fourth Floor, Chicago, IL 60601 or motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

L.P., Eden Prairie, Minnesota

A: Hey, Mrs. Motormouth drives our full-size pickup. I had a part-time job driving a truck delivering auto parts and was trained to always back into the parking space. If I didn't the GPS would rat on me and I'd get scolded. Pulling forward out of a parking space is safer. The driver has a better view than backing out. It's also easier to slip the truck into the spot because you can cut it sharper. It's like pushing a shopping cart backward. Test that once you get inside the store.

Life & Style

Beyoncé wins 2 Grammys, Viola Davis win makes her an EGOT

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Beyoncé has already won two Grammys on Sunday, bringing her a step closer in her pursuit of being the most decorated artist in the show's history.

During the Grammys pre-telecast ceremony, Beyoncé won for the first time ever in the best dance-electronic music recording category for "Break My Soul."

She also won for best traditional R&B performance for "Plastic Off the Sofa."

Beyoncé, who now has 30 awards, only needs two more wins to eclipse the record held by the late Hungarian-British conductor Georg Solti, who has 31 Grammys. Solti has held on to the record since 1997.

It's the first time Beyoncé has been nominated in the dance category. Her seventh studio project is up for best dance-electronic music album.

Beyoncé entered Sunday's ceremony as the leading nominee including album, song and record of the year. If she wins in any of those major categories, it'll be her first since since she received the song of the year honor for "Single Ladies" in 2010.

Muni Long—a best new artist candidate—beat out Beyoncé in the best R&B performance category for her song, "Hrs. and Hrs."

Beyonce's other nominations include best R&B song for "Cuff It" and song written for visual media for "Be Alive," the Oscar-nominated song from the "King Richard" soundtrack.

That's one of the main storylines heading into Sunday's ceremony with several of music's biggest names who are in the running for the night's top honors—Harry Styles, Mary J. Blige, Kendrick Lamar, ABBA and Lizzo are all among the nominees in for album of the year. Adele joins them in the record of the year competition.

Viola Davis is now an EGOT—a term for those who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony—after she wins for best audio book, narration and storytelling recording. The actor gave an emotional speech and emphatically said "I just EGOT" after she marched on stage to collect her award.

"Oh, my God," she said. "I wrote this book to honor the 6-year-old Viola, to honor her, her life, her joy, her trauma, everything," Davis said. "It has just been such a journey."

Viola Davis accepts the award for best audio book, narration, and storytelling recording for "Finding Me: A Memoir" at the 65th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023, in Los Angeles. AP

Brandi Carlile made a rare appearance during the pre-telecast for a major artist. The singer showed up after her song "Broke Horses" won for best rock performance and best rock song, a songwriter's award.

"It's rock 'n' roll, man," said a smiling Carlile, who jogged on stage with a couple of her band members. "I cannot tell you how much this means to us. We're born and raised in Seattle. When I met these guys 22 years ago we decided to get into a band."

Carlile co-wrote "Broken Horses" with twin brothers Phil and Tim Hanseroth.

"Oh my God, this is amazing," she said. "Oh, I'll never be the same."

'Knock at the Cabin' knocks off 'Avatar' at the box office

NEW YORK (AP)—For the first time in almost two months, the box office doesn't belong to blue people.

After seven weeks as the top film in theaters, "Avatar: The Way of Water" twas finally knocked out of the No. 1 spot by the M. Night Shyamalan thriller "Knock at the Cabin" and the octogenarian comedy "80 for Brady."

"Knock at the Cabin," a home invasion horror film with an apocalyptic riff, dethroned James Cameron's 3-D sci-fi epic with $14.2 million in ticket sales at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. The Universal Pictures release stars Dave Bautista as one of four strangers who approach a family vacationing in a rural cabin.

The opening for "Knock at the Cabin" came up shy of some of Shyamalan's recent releases. His last film, 2021's "Old," about a beach that rapidly ages those who visit it, launched with $16.9 million and ultimately collected $90.1 million worldwide. His 2019 film "Glass," the third installment in the director's "Unbreakable" trilogy, opened with $40.3 million on its way to grossing $247 million globally. Every other film directed by Shyamalan has opened higher than "Knock at the Cabin."

But "Knock at the Cabin" still marks Shyamalan's seventh film as director to open No. 1. With a modest budget of $20 million, "Knock at the Cabin" should easily turn a profit. The film, which drew mostly positive reviews from critics (68% on Rotten Tomatoes), added another $7 million internationally.

Taking second place was "80 for Brady," a comedy about four friends (Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Rita Moreno and Sally Field) who take a trip to the 2017 Super Bowl. It opened with an estimated $12.5 million. Shortly after announcing his retirement from football (again), Tom Brady attended the film's premiere.

Grandparents make little effort to see grandkids

DEAR ABBY: I'm 33 with a wonderful husband and amazing kids, ages 4 and 6. I have a close bond with my parents. We live in a city about 80 miles from them. It seems like we are always the ones to do the visiting, and I have to practically beg them to visit me for one overnight visit a year. My house is smaller than theirs, but we offer up our bedroom for their stay. Meanwhile, because my brother still lives at home with my parents, I sleep on an air mattress when I'm there.

Abby, I bend myself into a pretzel to make it work for them, and yet there are always excuses why they won't visit. Mom tells me she misses the kids, but she invariably expects me to pack a bag and head that way. It's frustrating. Sometimes our budget is so tight, I don't have the luxury of spending an extra $70-plus in gas for a trip. My financial situation is not her burden, so I never mention it. I brought up just once in the past that she rarely visits, and she really does believe in her head that she visits at least twice a year. When I corrected her, she blew up.

I'm not sure how to feel about this. Sometimes it hurts inside like a rejection, and other times I feel like I need to tell myself to grow up. So here I am -- in the middle, with grandkids who love their grandparents, grandparents who love their grandkids and, if I don't play the mom-taxi, how will they see each other?

MOM-TAXI IN TENNESSEE

DEAR MOM-TAXI: They won't. And when your mother asks why you have stopped coming, point out that fuel is costly and your budget is very tight. Then suggest that if she wants her grandchildren to remember her when she and your dad are gone, they need to make more of an effort to visit you more than once a year. If their hesitancy is because your house isn't comfortable, suggest they stay at a nearby hotel or motel.

P.S. If your mother gets lonely between visits, she can always video chat, as countless other grandparents do today.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have been married more than 40 years. As he's grown older, he has become the stereotypical "grumpy old man." Although he can be thoughtful, like giving me flowers for my birthday, he's increasingly moody, impatient and angry. He often rants about politics and other things and won't stop trying to impose his views on me. I agree with some of his opinions, but he gets upset if I disagree.

Because I don't want an argument, I either don't respond or leave the room, which also upsets him. Sometimes he apologizes because he knows his ranting upsets me, but shortly after, he resumes doing it. I love him and do a lot of things for him, but living with him can be a downer. Can you suggest any strategies for coping with my "grumpy old man"?

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

ENDURING IT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

DEAR ENDURING IT: Schedule an annual physical exam for yourself and your grumpy old man. Behavioral changes in an older person should not be minimized or ignored because they could be a symptom of physical (or mental) illness. Once you know what you are dealing with, take your cues from the doctor or spend less time one-on-one with your husband and tell him why.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M THROWING PEOPLE OFF MY TRAIL WITH DECEPTIVE FOOTPRINTS.
SEE, EVERYONE WILL THINK THESE TRACKS WERE MADE BY A ONE-LEGGED KID GOING THAT WAY, AND THEY'LL BE COMPLETELY WRONG!
WHO EXACTLY IS ON YOUR TRAIL?
LOOK, IT DOESNT HURT TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS.
© 1993 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
WATTERSON 2-7

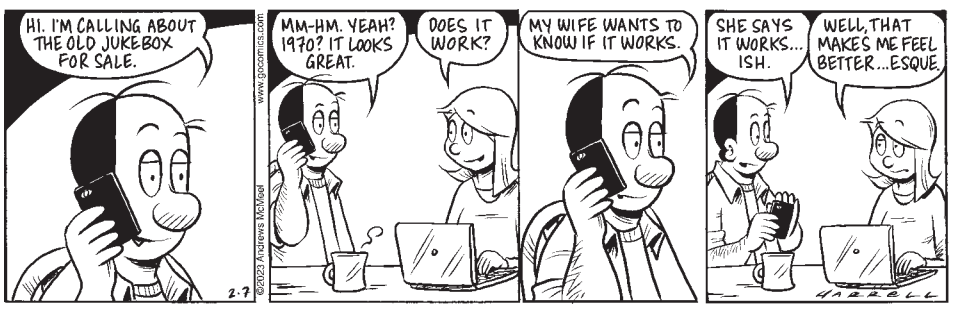
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

I'M ALWAYS MINDFUL OF OTHERS
JIM DAVIS 2-7
© 2023 PAWS, INC. All Rights Reserved.
SO I CAN AVOID THEM
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

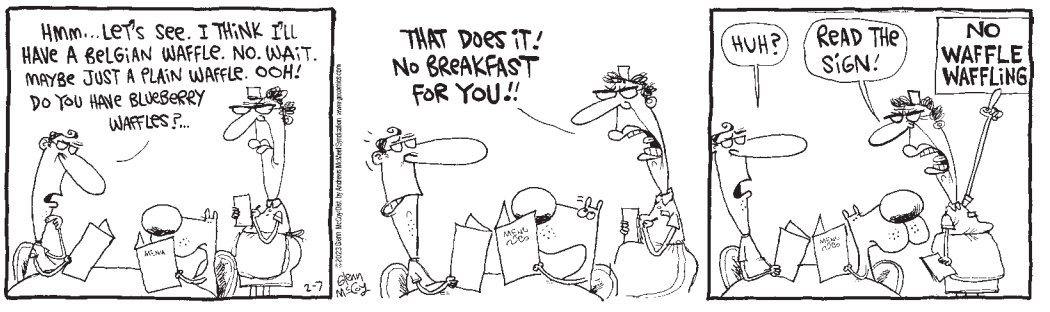
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


HI. I'M CALLING ABOUT THE OLD JUKEBOX FOR SALE.
MM-HM. YEAH? 1970? IT LOOKS GREAT.
DOES IT WORK?
MY WIFE WANTS TO KNOW IF IT WORKS.
SHE SAYS IT WORKS... ISH.
WELL, THAT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER...ESQUE
©2023 Andrews McMeel
www.gocomics.com
2-7

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


Hmm...Let's see. I think I'll have a Belgian waffle. No. Wait. Maybe just a plain waffle. Ooh! Do you have blueberry waffles?...
THAT DOES IT! No breakfast for you!!
HUH?
READ THE SIGN!
NO WAFFLE WAFFLING
2-7

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Faucet problem
5 Actress Dawber
8 Poet Whitman
12 Journalist Wintour
13 Gigi's "yes"
14 Roman god of love
15 Spotted beetles
17 Seized wheels
18 Knight's address
19 Jazz legend Lewis
21 Charlatan
24 Tidy
25 Org. for seniors
26 Hearty cuddles
30 Mao — -tung
31 Trombone part
32 Fan's shout
33 Thick floor coverings
35 Like ganders
36 — Ha-shanah
37 Some latte sizes
38 Humble
41 Cleo's slayer
42 Gumbo need
43 Noise dampeners
48 Asian nation
49 Slugger's stat
50 Jacob's twin
51 Ilk
52 Pro vote
53 "Ditto"

DOWN

1 Indian lentil dish
2 Genetic letters
3 Neighbor of Ill.
4 Settles the tab
5 Serve coffee
6 Calendar abbr.
7 Interprets incorrectly
8 Cordiality
9 Iowa city
10 Easy gait
11 Helen's home
16 eBay offer
20 Swiss river
21 Waller or Domino
22 Impetuous
23 Bailiwick
24 Equine comment
26 Very windy
27 Caspian Sea feeder
28 Chutzpah
29 "— Gotta Have It"
31 "No seats" signs
34 Laundry challenge
35 Sugar trees
37 Recipe abbr.
38 Shed
39 Fine
40 Let fall
41 La Scala solo
44 Lincoln nickname
45 "Suits" network
46 Leg, in slang
47 Take to court

Solution time: 22 mins.

F	O	G		D	O	M	E	S		B	R	O
A	V	E		A	N	G	L	E		O	O	P
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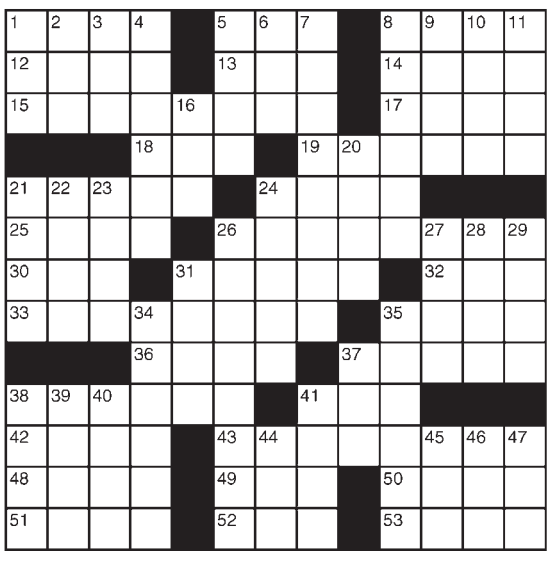
I	R	E		E	C	O	L	E		A	R	C
D	E	L		D	E	T	E	R		X	E	S

Yesterday's answer 2-7



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ashton Kutcher, 45; Chris Rock, 58; Garth Brooks, 61; James Spader, 63.

Happy Birthday: Planning pays off this year. A regimented routine will help deter others from messing up your schedule or interfering with your goals. High energy, precision and paying attention to detail will help you mark your place and position yourself for success. Let those you love do as they please, and you'll receive the same privilege. Practice peace and love. Your numbers are 9, 14, 18, 26, 34, 42, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* A financial opportunity is within reach. Refuse to let someone bump you out of position and reap the rewards that belong to you. Truth and honesty are the cornerstones for growth, stability and reaching your destination with pride and honor. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Success is dependent on following through with a well-thought-out plan. Nothing will change in your favor unless you make an effort. Stop waiting and start doing, and you'll see the possibilities. Do whatever will benefit you most, and don't look back. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Stay focused on what you are responsible for, and do your best to get ahead. Refuse to let anyone waste your time or ask for favors. Don't lend or borrow when working and saving are necessary. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Share ideas, set up a meeting with someone heading in a similar direction and do your best to make a good impression. The help you receive will bring your plans to fruition. An interview or presentation will go your way. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Talks will turn into something tangible. Listen and add your perspective, and an opportunity will sprout. Don't take anyone's word as gospel; check facts and figures, do the work yourself and take a leadership role to ensure things go according to plan. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Listen, but verify what you hear before passing the information along. If you protect against loss and lies, you will save money, dignity and self-esteem. Overlook loved ones' defects; offer positive input and help turn an emotional dilemma into a good time. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Take precautions, ensure everything is safe and put your mind at ease. A day trip or meeting with someone can quickly run amok if expectations are too high or you take on too much. A self-improvement project will lift your spirits. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Get organized. Demands will bring you down, but following your heart will pick you up. Clear the path by taking care of business fast and efficiently and move on to something you find enjoyable. Romance will enhance your life and bring you hope. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Balance and integrity will help you get ahead. Set high standards and goals that will make you proud and give you hope for a brighter future. Eliminate drama and people who leave you feeling down in the dumps; replace them with positive reinforcements. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Put your thinking cap on and you'll find a way to help others and get something in return. Let your experience guide you to a brighter future, and don't be afraid to challenge anyone who stands in your way. Push forward. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Explore the possibilities. Reaching out to people who offer a different perspective or way of doing things will give you the push you need to finish what you start. Stand behind your word and you'll gain respect and support. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't hide the past or live a lie. Face the truth and navigate your way to a better life and connections that won't disappoint you. Your insight will clarify what you want, what's possible and how best to get your way. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are confident, persuasive and adaptable. You are worldly and intent.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		3		8		2		9
9	2		7					
5		8	2		9			4
7		4	8	5	6			2
	1			4	7		5	6
							4	
		7			8			1
1			4	7	3		6	
	5				1	4	7	

Difficulty: ★★ 2-7

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

7	5	4	6	9	3	8	1	2
8	1	2	4	7	5	9	3	6
9	3	6	2	8	1	7	5	4
5	4	7	9	3	6	1	2	8
1	2	8	7	5	4	3	6	9
3	6	9	8	1	2	5	4	7
4	7	5	3	6	9	2	8	1
2	8	1	5	4	7	6	9	3
6	9	3	1	2	8	4	7	5

Difficulty: ★ 2-6

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

A GOOD TUSCAN WINE Solution: 8 letters

O	O	N	A	N	G	I	M	R	A	C	A	G	E	D
N	L	I	S	V	E	S	E	V	O	I	G	N	A	S
I	L	L	R	E	E	I	F	F	A	G	I	D	E	R
C	E	C	E	O	P	S	I	L	B	N	T	I	E	O
L	N	H	R	N	S	A	O	O	O	S	N	S	T	V
A	U	I	U	B	A	S	R	R	T	A	A	H	S	A
T	R	L	O	M	B	N	E	G	T	N	I	E	A	L
N	B	L	P	A	E	V	G	M	L	T	H	C	T	F
O	D	L	R	L	A	M	T	I	E	O	C	I	I	T
M	U	R	L	N	A	C	S	U	T	R	E	P	U	S
M	E	A	I	S	T	E	E	W	S	S	L	S	R	E
L	I	L	S	C	I	S	S	A	L	C	B	O	F	V
A	L	E	S	A	S	S	I	C	A	I	A	R	T	R
A	T	F	I	L	E	T	M	I	G	N	O	N	E	A
O	N	A	I	B	B	E	R	T	O	A	S	T	Y	H

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Aged, Barrel, Bold, Bottle, Brunello, Carmignano, Chianti, Chill, Classic, Dish, Filet Mignon, Flavor, Fruit, Grapes, Harvest, Herbs, Lamb, Masseto, Merlot, Messorio, Montalcino, Ornellaia, Plum, Pour, Rediggaffi, Rose, Sangiovese, Sassicaia, Solaia, Spice, Super Tuscan, Sweet, Taste, Tignanello, Toast, Trebbiano, Tuscany, Vanilla

Yesterday's Answer: Pens

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Knicks rally from 21 points down, beat 76ers, 108-97

NEW YORK (AP)—Julius Randle had 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, Jalen Brunson scored 21 points and the New York Knicks overcame an early 21-point deficit to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 108-97 on Sunday night.

Evan Fournier came off the bench to add 17 points for the Knicks, who were playing a night after an overtime loss to the Los Angeles Clippers.

"It was great," Randle said. "I think the biggest difference between last night and tonight, where I thought we could have won, was tonight it was our defense."

Joel Embiid had 31 points for the 76ers, going 18 of 19 from the free throw line, and grabbed 14 rebounds.

Philadelphia had won nine of its previous 10 games. The 76ers also blew a 21-point lead in a 119-109 loss to Orlando on Monday.

"It's never easy," Embiid said. "A 20-point lead in the NBA, that's nothing. Any team can come back and that's what they did tonight."

Philadelphia went ahead by 21 points in the first quarter, but the Knicks continued to chip away and cut it to 53-51 at halftime.

Randle's 3-pointer to start the second half put New York ahead 54-53, its first lead since 2-0.

AP

New York Knicks forward Julius Randle (30) reacts as his team maintains their lead the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Philadelphia 76ers, Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023, in New York.

Philadelphia went back up by eight and led 79-76 heading into the fourth quarter.

Tyrese Maxey opened the final quarter with a three-point play, but the Knicks scored the next 10 points and capped a 15-2 run on Fournier's 3-pointer, giving them a 91-84 lead.

They never trailed again.

"I thought our second unit came in and struggled," 76ers coach Doc Rivers said. "This is the second time that has happened. The same thing happened in Orlando. Both times, we were scoring too easy. The second group comes in and thinks this is an offensive game and they didn't see the reason the first group got the lead was because of defense."

The 76ers pulled within three, but Randle's floater made it 102-92 with 2:18 remaining.

Philadelphia never got closer than eight the rest of the way.

"It was a great team win all-around," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "It was great. We digged in the fourth quarter."

Miles McBride had 14 points and Isaiah Hartenstein tied a season high with 14 rebounds for the Knicks.

De'Anthony Melton and Tobias Harris each had 14 points for the 76ers. James Harden had 12 points and 12 assists.

"They played harder," Rivers added. "They got everything. They were the more physical team. They were tougher."

RAPTORS 106, GRIZZLIES 103

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Pascal Siakam scored 19 points, including a pair of free throws with 9 seconds left, and Toronto rallied from a 15-point deficit to beat Memphis.

Jaren Jackson Jr. missed a 3-pointer with 5.2 seconds left that would have tied the game for the Grizzlies, who played without star Ja Morant because of right wrist soreness.

Toronto won its second straight game and went 4-3 on its season-long seven-game road swing. Memphis has lost three straight and eight of nine.

Chris Boucher scored 17 points and Scottie Barnes had 16 for the Raptors. Desmond Bane led Memphis with 26 points, while Jackson had 18 points and four blocks.

TIMBERWOLVES 128, NUGGETS 98

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—D'Angelo Russell had 18 points and 10 assists, Anthony Edwards scored 20 and Minnesota cruised past Denver, which was missing two-time MVP Nikola Jokic and three other starters on the second night of a back-to-back.

Rudy Gobert had 16 points for the Timberwolves, who never trailed and opened a 20-point advantage in the second quarter on the way to a seventh win in 10 games.

Along with Jokic, the Nuggets played without Jamal Murray, Aaron Gordon and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope because of injuries. Michael Porter Jr., the lone regular starter in the lineup, led Denver with 22 points.

PELICANS 136, KINGS 104

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Trey Murphy III made six 3-pointers and scored 30 points as New Orleans overcame the absence of several starters to beat Sacramento.

CJ McCollum scored 24 points for the Pelicans, who shot 57.1% overall and combined to hit 14 of 26 from 3-point range after struggling from deep throughout their recent 10-game losing streak.

Willy Hernangomez had 22 points and 16 rebounds, and Naji Marshall scored 17 points for New Orleans, which was missing Zion Williamson, Brandon Ingram and Jonas Valanciunas.

Malik Monk scored 16 for the Kings, who lost their second straight game without De'Aaron Fox. He is away from the team for unspecified personal reasons.

MAGIC 119, HORNETS 113

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Paolo Banchero had 22 points and 10 rebounds, Wendell Carter Jr. added 20 points and 12 rebounds and Orlando took advantage of Charlotte's poor foul shooting.

The Hornets made just one of nine free throws in the fourth quarter while Orlando was going 13 of 15. Charlotte finished 11 of 23 from the line in its fourth straight loss — Orlando wound up 27 of 30 on foul shots.

LaMelo Ball had 26 of his 33 points after halftime for the Hornets.

Markelle Fultz had 16 points and Frank Wagner chipped in with 14 for the Magic, who have won three of four.

CAVALIERS 122, PACERS 103

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Darius Garland scored 24 points, Isaac Okoro added 20 and Cleveland made 15 3-pointers to rout Indiana.

The Cavaliers shot 52.3% percent from the field, including 15 of 37 (40.5%) from long range, to complement a top-ranked defense that held Indiana to 43.5% shooting.

Jarrett Allen contributed 18 points and 13 rebounds, Evan Mobley had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Donovan Mitchell added 19 points and six assists for the Cavs.

Myles Turner had 27 points and 10 rebounds for Indiana, which has lost 12 of 14. All-Star Tyrese Haliburton finished with 15 points and 11 assists.

Source: Kyrie Irving going to the Dallas Mavericks

DALLAS (AP)—Kyrie Irving is getting his wish. He's getting traded.

And Luka Doncic is getting another All-Star to help him in Dallas.

The Mavericks and Brooklyn Nets agreed Sunday on a blockbuster trade: Irving—the super-talented and often-enigmatic eight-time All-Star point guard—heads to Dallas, ending the pairing with Kevin Durant that never really had a chance to click.

The Nets get Spencer Dinwiddie, Dorian Finney-Smith and a package of draft picks, according to a person familiar with the terms of the deal who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because it had not been finalized. Dallas also gets Markieff Morris.

The Athletic and ESPN first reported the trade agreement. It will become complete once the teams have a call with the NBA, which is standard for all trades.

The move comes just two days after Irving told the Nets that he wanted to be traded by Thursday's league deadline, after talks about a contract beyond this season didn't go to his liking. He wasn't with the Nets for their game Saturday, and by Sunday afternoon, his time in Brooklyn appeared to be at an end.

It was not immediately clear when Irving would make his debut with Dallas. The Mavericks play at Utah on Monday night. ESPN reported that Irving would take a physical in Dallas on Monday with a plan to join the team for a game Wednesday at the Los Angeles Clippers.

"My first reaction was it seemed like a really good move," Toronto coach Nick Nurse said Sunday before the Raptors faced Memphis. "(The Nets) got a lot of assets back for a guy who wasn't going to be back, it seemed. I think that's important to do. And I think for Dallas, they got a big-time star to go with the one they've got."

Irving is averaging 27.1 points, 5.3 assists and 5.1 rebounds this season. Doncic is averaging 33.4 points, 8.9 rebounds and 8.2 assists. They instantly become one of the NBA's top duos, and figure to make Dallas even a stronger contender in a Western Conference that has no shortage of championship-capable teams.

Irving is, for now, scheduled to become a free agent after the season. The Los Angeles Lakers were believed to have been one of a few teams interested in Irving—a notion that could have reunited Irving with LeBron James, with whom he won a title with in Cleveland in 2016.

The trade does again pair Irving with Dallas general manager Nico Harrison, who was a Nike executive before taking over the Mavericks in 2021.

Irving had a relationship with Nike for the entirety of his NBA career until earlier this season, when the sneaker giant dropped him — and canceled the planned release of his next signature shoe just before it dropped — as part of the massive fallout from Irving posting a link to an antisemitic film on his Twitter account.

That was one of many drama-filled sagas that marked Irving's time with the Nets. He wouldn't get vaccinated against COVID-19 and, because of New York City workplace rules, had to miss most of Brooklyn's home games last season. He also took two leaves of absence during the 2020-21 season.

He has also expressed no shortage of controversial opinions during his career—including repeated questioning whether the Earth was round before eventually apologizing to science teachers.

The various issues limited Irving to 143 games in three-plus seasons with the Nets, and he and Durant were together for just 74 of them after their celebrated pairing in the summer of 2019. Irving signed as a free agent while Durant joined the Nets on a sign-and-trade with Golden State.

After the Nets lost to Dallas at home in overtime in October, Irving said he saw traits of the Mavericks being "a great team." And he spoke at length of how highly he thinks of Doncic's game, after the Mavs star had a 41-point, 14-rebound, 11-assist masterpiece.

"I think first, we've got to discuss just how long he's been playing professional basketball. I think it's been since like 14, 15 years old," Irving said that night. "He's used to seeing so many different defenses, so many different roles that he's played, I'm sure, overseas. And now that he's in the NBA, you just see him. He plays at an incredible pace. He makes great decisions."

Mahomes, Hurts latest Texas prep QBs on Super Bowl stage

DALLAS (AP) — Texas high school quarterbacks guru Todd Dodge got what he wanted when Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes and Jalen Hurts of Philadelphia won their conference championship games.

"I really like Joe Burrow," Dodge said with a chuckle in reference to Cincinnati's star quarterback, "but I'm not going to root for Joe Burrow over Patrick Mahomes, that Texas quarterback."

The Mahomes-Hurts matchup is the first showdown between a pair of Texas high school QBs and the latest milestone for a football-crazy state once known much more for Earl Campbell and Eric Dickerson than whoever was handing off to those future Pro Football Hall of Fame running backs.

Dodge, a recently retired high school coach who won seven state championships, played a big role in the start of the transformation around 1980. He was the quarterback for what he considered the father of the passing game in Texas.

Ronnie Thompson, a high school coach in Port Arthur about 100 miles from Houston, was throwing before it was cool in the Lone Star State, which made Dodge a high-profile recruit for the Texas Longhorns.

While Dodge's career in Austin was disappointing, his legacy of training quarterbacks in his home state is unmistakable. One of the keys was identifying QBs — plenty of them — as early as seventh grade, with the goal of always having two capable of flourishing on the varsity.

Before the likes of Dodge, Art Briles and the late Sonny Detmer came along, the focus was usually on finding the best running back and building from there.

"Jalen Hurts 40 years ago would have been the next great tailback in the Southwest Conference," said Dodge, who still runs a quarterback training program in retirement. "Somewhere along the way, his dad put the ball in his hands and he started throwing it."

Indeed, coach Averion Hurts at Channelview just outside Houston put his son at QB. Jalen Hurts went from college star at Alabama and Oklahoma to Philadelphia backup behind Carson Wentz to NFL MVP candidate in a matter of six years.

Mahomes had the throwing pedigree as the son of former major league pitcher Pat Mahomes, and his strong arm was evident long before he became the starter at Whitehouse in East Texas.

The Chiefs traded up to get Mahomes 10th overall in 2017, declared him the starter in the offseason a year later and watched him become MVP that year and a Super Bowl winner the next.

"I think in Texas it's been a program of building football players up for a long time," said Mahomes, whose Super Bowl matchup against Hurts will be the first between two Black quarterbacks. "There's still the great running backs, there's still the great receivers, the great tight ends, whatever you want to say."

The most recent Super Bowl-winning quarterback from Texas is Matthew Stafford, who played in the Dallas enclave of Highland Park before going to Georgia and getting drafted No. 1 overall by Detroit in 2009.

His prolific career with the Lions mostly went nowhere before a trade to the Rams immediately led to a title last season. His high school coach, four-time state title winner Randy Allen, has a quarterback training program he believes he started after seeing Dodge conduct a coaching clinic.

Once Texas became fertile ground for quarterbacks, it was only natural for growth in the college game, and subsequently the pros.

"College coaches want to win, number one," said Allen, the winningest active coach in Texas. "And number two, they know if they've got a Texas high school quarterback, that he's probably played in front of big crowds. He's probably played against great competition. He's probably had great high school coaching and he's probably ready to play as a freshman."

One of Allen's Highland Park teams was a round away from facing Mahomes in the Texas playoffs a decade ago, but Mahomes' team lost.

Mahomes never made a deep playoff run before thriving at Texas Tech under Kliff Kingsbury, a prolific Texas high school QB himself in the 1990s.

Allen, Dodge and Mahomes all mentioned the expansion of offseason 7-on-7 football as a significant part of the development of Texas quarterbacks. Dozens of tournaments around the state culminate in a state championship event every summer in College Station, home of Texas A&M.

Dodge also believes it helped when pass-happy teams started winning state championships. In one five-year stretch at Southlake Carroll, where son Riley is now coach, the elder Dodge had a 79-1 record with four state titles in the state's largest classification.

The other three titles for Dodge came at Austin Westlake. Before his arrival, that school produced the first two Super Bowl-winning QBs from Texas in Drew Brees (New Orleans, 2009 season) and Nick Foles (Philadelphia, 2017).

Hurts says the high school highlights might have something to do with how the mindset about the position. A regional cable network for Texas carries a live scoreboard show every Friday night, well into a six-week postseason that's capped by championship-game crowds approaching 50,000 at the home of the Dallas Cowboys.

"Texas is so big," Hurts said. "I'd turn on the TV and see, you had the Texas high school football late night show. It runs throughout the whole state. You see what (Mahomes is) doing."

Western Pennsylvania is famous for quarterbacks, too, with Hall of Famers Dan Marino, Joe Montana, Joe Namath, Jim Kelly and Johnny Unitas among the products. Mahomes is aware of this — because he has teammates from a state that also takes its high school football just as seriously.

"I brag to all my PA guys because they brag they have the best state for football because of the history," Mahomes said. "But I'm like, we're talking about the present, and Texas is pretty good right now."

Mahomes has a point. Texas is already guaranteed to be the high school home of four of the past six Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks.

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes talks to the media before an NFL football workout Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo.

AP

Philadelphia Eagles' Jalen Hurts pauses during a news conference at the NFL football team's training facility, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, in Philadelphia.

Kirk Cousins rallies NFC to 35-33 win over AFC in Pro Bowl

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Kirk Cousins threw three touchdowns passes Sunday to rally the NFC to a 35-33 victory over the AFC in the Pro Bowl Games and end that conference's five-game losing streak.

Cousins completed 15 of 19 passes for 150 yards in the third and final flag football game of the NFL's reformatted all-star game, which gave the NFC the victory. His AFC counterpart, Derek Carr, was 6 of 12 for 104 yards, two TDs and an interception.

Based on the earlier flag games and skills competitions, the AFC took a 21-15 lead into the final flag game.

The Pro Bowl changed its format this season, eliminating the traditional game and replacing it with three flag football games played on a 50-yard field and a series of skills competitions.

Each of the first two flag games were worth six points and each skills event was three. The total points were accumulated to form the score entering the third and final flag game.

Part of the reason for the change is that tackling became nearly non-existent in recent years because players were concerned about injuries. The Cleveland Browns, however, announced defensive end Myles Garrett dislocated a toe Sunday, but X-rays were negative.

The announced crowd of 58,331 was more than 2,000 more than last year, also played at Allegiant Stadium. No site has been announced for next year's Pro Bowl, but it's unlikely the NFL will want that event to be played in the same venue just before the Super Bowl, which will be in Las Vegas.

The AFC, based on Thursday's four skills competitions, took a 9-3 lead into Sunday.

Then the NFC tied it by winning the first flag game 33-27. Facing fourth-and-7, Seattle's Geno Smith completed a pass to Dallas' CeeDee Lamb, who eluded Chargers safety Derwin James with a spin move at the 9-yard line and then ran into the end zone for a 32-yard touchdown with a second left.

Smith completed 14 of 16 passes for 239 yards and five touchdowns. The AFC's Tyler Huntley was 15 of 20 for 192 yards and four TDs.

A kicking contest that was taped Thursday went to the AFC, and the NFC won the gridiron gauntlet obstacle-course race Sunday to make the score 12-12 entering the second flag game.

The AFC earned six more points in that game for an 18-12 lead. Jacksonville's Trevor Lawrence converted a fourth-and-20 with a 45-yard touchdown pass to Buffalo's Stefon Diggs with 2 minutes left to win 18-13. Diggs ran out of the end zone to where photographers were gathered. He grabbed one of the cameras and took photos of his AFC teammates as they posed.

Lawrence was 6 of 11 for 83 yards, two touchdowns and an interception. NFC quarterback Jared Goff completed 5 of 12 passes for 44 yards, a TD and an interception.

Both conferences split the following two skills competitions, with the AFC winning the strength contest and the NFC taking the finals of the best catch, making the overall score 21-15.

Nakama is only undefeated team left in Roccball

Nakama has emerged as the only undefeated team after four rounds of Roccball at Marianas High School's annual Roccball season of games.

Nakama was able to remain undefeated by outscoring Team Bandits, 39-25, last week at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Defending Roccball champions Tomadachi was defeated by Team Lotus, 35-32. Team Lotus was also able to outscore Tomodachi in multiple point scoring methods with 6 aces to 4, 2 xunks to 0, and 3 goals to 1. As a result of good defensive plays by Team Lotus, Tomodachi was limited to the fewest multiple point scoring methods in a game this year.

In the games between Dusty Feetz and Sufa and Phan Gotte and I Hit That, Phan Gotte and Dusty Feetz won their games, 39-25, and 32013, respectively.

The Heavy Hitters of Roccball after four rounds of competition are Jerome Manzon and Rizza Relucio of Team Tomodachi. Manzon has scored 16 aces, 1 xunk, 2 kees, and 5 goals for 45 points. Relucio has scored 7 aces for 14 points.

The title of Heavy Hitter is awarded to players who have scored the most points scored in addition to the floor point scoring system used in volleyball. Manzon and Relucio will be awarded Roccball T-shirts for being the Heavy Hitters after four rounds of competition

The current team standings is Nakama with a 4-0 win-loss card, followed by Tomadachi (3-1), Lotus (3-1), Dusty Feetz (3-1), Phan Gotte (2-2), Bandits (1-4), Sufa (0-4), and I Hit That (0-4). ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Team Nakama, with their new Roccball T-shirts on, is the only remaining undefeated team in the current season of the CNMI's indigenous sport.

DANGOL

From Page 20

Nepal was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"To me, being able to swim in Nepal and do well felt amazing. This achievement meant more opportunities for my future and more opportunities to meet new people. I didn't know what to expect going into the meet, but felt so welcomed during my time there that everything felt even more fun," said the Albany High School student.

She dedicated her record and medals to her family—parents, brother, and family in Nepal.

"I wouldn't be able to do anything without my family here, and it was so exciting to see most of my extended family in October and get to know them more."

Aasish, meanwhile, said he owes all his success in swimming to his coaches and ever-supportive family.

"Being able to compete and do well in Nepal meant a lot to me, and I am glad I got to do it. It was a fun experience to meet and race in a new place with new people," who like her sister also goes to Albany High School.

As for the siblings representing Nepal in the Olympics, their mother said the country's laws prevent them from doing so.

"We would love to if we were able to. To be able to, the Nepalese government would have to change their citizenship laws," said their mother, Ren.

As for representing the CNMI in the Pacific Games and Micronesian Games, the siblings said it's something they would love to do.

"It would be really fun for the kids to come back and swim with everyone on Saipan. They would have a blast," she said.

Ashley and Aasish Dangol used to swim for Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center under head coach and CNMI national coach Hiroyuki Kimura.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ashley Dangol poses with the medals she won during their brief trip to Nepal

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Aasish Dangol in a file photo.

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From Page 20

was nothing better than getting back into routine and getting free gym memberships."

He said that the challenges he faced was the "challenge in the challenge—it was amazing. I think the hardest part was trying to make time for it, whether it's the first thing of the day, or the last thing of the day, or in between. Also, time management and having non-negotiables, like 'I need to do this to get this membership.' So that was the goal."

As he helps run The Next Level Thrift Shop, he will use one of the free gym memberships as a giveaway.

Bracken and Mabutas are few of the participants who have completed the 31 Day 1-Mile Run challenge and will continue their streak and run for 365 days straight.

Mabutas, for her part, said that this year she now has motivation to keep going in her fitness journey, after being sedentary during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Bracken, she said it's not about motivation for her—it's about discipline. They both thanked their coach, Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr.

This was the second year Latte Built hosted these challenges, and this year saw the new addition of the 31 Day 1 Mile Run coordinated by Dela Cruz.

Latte Built Gym owner Derek Cutting said that this year's turnout was more than triple last year's. With that, he said "I think it's becoming our annual thing."

As for the finishers of the challenges, Cutting said, "They did an awesome job. I just want to congratulate everyone for dedicating their first month of the year on a positive note—a physical and healthy positive note. Whatever challenge they chose doesn't matter. And for those that stuck it out, awesome. For those that maybe fell off it's okay just start up now. You don't have a free month, but that doesn't mean that you can't start it up again for yourselves."

"We're always here for questions or advice, so they can always come to us and ask anything. We have a whole staff of trainers and myself so pretty much everyone can help them out, whatever the questions," Cutting added.

Edward Dela Cruz Jr., president of Run Saipan and coordinator of the 1-mile challenge said, "Derek is a very good friend of mine and came to me to think of a cardio challenge everyone can do for 31 days so I said why not a 31 day run challenge. I just help keep track of the participants and run it but this entire thing was a wonderful idea by Derek. It's all him. I don't know anywhere else can you get a free entry challenge and get a gym membership for a month for completion as a reward. It's definitely a great choice for people looking to not do the standard weight loss body transformation challenge."

He added, "The great thing about this is it's a challenge not a competition. If you complete it, you get rewarded for your hard work and effort like everyone else who worked hard. Throughout the month, we established a support group to cheer each other on and motivate each other. It's a great program. Everyone wins as long as they complete it."

To the finishers, he said "Congrats and great job building a strong habit to get in a mile of exercises they wouldn't have done if they were not in the challenge. Thank you to Derek for supporting health and wellness out of his pocket to make an impact in people's daily lives."

KHS

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Lucio Aldan.

Meanwhile, the Eagles were off to a slow start as only 5 points—4 of which were from foul shots from Sui Yi, Jiahang Wu, and Ayden Yumul were made in the first half.

The Ayuyus, however, side-stepped, alley-ooped, and layuped their way through the first half—as their offense did not let up, with Satur scoring 6 more points, Diaz adding 3, and Myles Techur shooting two free throws, to end the first half, 26-5.

It was not any better for the Eagles in the second half as they couldn't find their rhythm with their shots and their defense slacking.

Only Julian Taitano made the most contact with the basket as he managed to shoot 6 points, but with little help from the rest of the team, his effort was all for naught.

For the next few minutes until the end of the game, the Ayuyus rained down more shots from the perimeter and within the paint, as Aldan finished with 11 and Satur shot 10 points.

The rest of the Ayuyus contributed to the pile of points against the Eagles, with Alejandro Ortiz scoring 6, Techur with 5, and Anthony Dikito and Reed Camacho with 4 each.

Over in the first varsity caging of the night, MHS drenched the Torchbearers, led by Airson Atan's 13 points. Teammate Aiden Suba went double digits as well with 10 points.

The Torchbearers, on the other hand, had a hard time connecting their shots with the rim as the first half ended, 17-29.

However, with the Torchbearers looking for redemption in the second half, the Dolphins carried their momentum as Atan sank back-to-back jump shots which pulled them further from the Torchbearers.

The Torchbearers' Jacob Wang tried to edge closer to the Dolphins with a couple of 3-pointers, but the Dolphins' pinpoint accuracy and tight defense tired them down—and eventually revved too far ahead that they couldn't catch up.

In the junior varsity games earlier in the afternoon, Saipan Southern High School JV went against Mount Carmel JV and won, 31-18 ; and MHS JV won against KHS JV, 38-17.

In the varsity standings, MCS still leads with a 2-0 record; KHS and MHS are now at 1-0 each; SSHS is still 1-0; ACS is at 1-3; GCA has no wins yet with 0-4; and SIS is still 0-1.

In the junior varsity standings, MHS JV is now undefeated at 3-0, KHS and SSHS are both 2-1; MHS JV-2 is still at 1-2; and MCS JV have yet to win with 0-4.

KHS 65 – Diaz 15, Satur 12, Aldan 11, Ortiz and Dikito 6, Techur 5, Camacho 4, Hocog, Norita, and Rabauliman, 2.

GCA 16 – Taitano 6, Adriatico, Daproza, and Balakrishna, 2; Wu, Yumul, and Jones, 1.

Scoring by halves: 26-5; 65-16.

MHS 51 – Atan 13, Suba 10, Viana 8, Pelisamen Jr. and Licayan 4, Sanchez, Lukas, and Ong 2.

ACS 35 – Wang 11, Cui and Luo 8, Li 6, Ma 2.

Scoring by halves: 29-17; 51-35.

Knicks rally from 21 points down, beat 76ers, 108-97

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Nakama is only undefeated team left in Roccball

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Dangol siblings make waves in Nepal

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Nepal is a landlocked country in the Himalayas, but that didn't prevent siblings Ashley and Aasish Dangol from making waves in their parent's homeland.

The siblings reset a couple of national records and won a bunch of medals when they competed in Nepal late last year.

Ashley swam the 100m women's butterfly in 1:7.74 to beat Gaurika Singh's old mark of 1:9.97, while Aasish completed the 200m breaststroke in 2:29.60 to eclipse the 2:31.25 that belonged to Subham Shrestha.

In all, the 16-year-old won eight medals during her brief trip to Nepal—six gold and two silver medals.

She won the 100m freestyle, 50m freestyle, 800m freestyle, 200m backstroke, 100m butterfly, and 50m butterfly and finished runner-up in the 100m backstroke and 50m backstroke.

Aasish scored a total of eight medals—three gold, four silver, and one bronze medal.

The 14-year-old bagged gold in the 200m breaststroke, 200m butterfly, and 400m individual medley. He also won silver in the 1,500m freestyle, 100m butterfly, 400m freestyle, and 200m IM. Aasish then took the bronze in the 100m breaststroke.

Ashley said competing in

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Ashley and Aasish Dangol show off the medals they won during a recent trip to their parents' homeland of Nepal.

KHS, MHS beat foes in HS boys caging

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Kagman High School Ayuyus boys basketball varsity team beat the Grace Christian Academy Eagles varsity, while the Marianas High School Dolphins defeated Agape Christian Torchbearers in the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League Friday night at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Ayuyus did not take it easy against the Eagles as they more than quadrupled their score, 65-16, in a blowout game led by Austin Diaz's 15 points, while the Dolphins drenched the fire of the Torchbearers, 51-35.

KHS' Frankie Satur opened up the game with a field goal, with the next 6 points coming from teammate

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LEIGH GASES
Kagman High School's Austin Diaz goes for a layup in their win against Grace Christian Academy in the continuation of the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

32 complete Latte Built Gym challenges

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Out of almost 60 who attempted to start the new year off on the right foot by tackling one of four Latte Built Gym's challenges, 32 completed it and were awarded free gym memberships last Friday at the Latte Built Gym in Oleai.

The four 31 Day Challenges were: 31 Day 1 Mile Run Challenge; 31 Day Step Challenge—7,500 steps daily; 31 Day Fitness Challenge; and 31 Day Weight Training Challenge. All four started last Jan. 1 and ended on Jan. 31.

The finishers were Eamon Tang, Ricky John Santiago, Heather Camacho, Nicole Babauta, Erik Basa, Kyle Hocog, Selmalyn Taitano, Jaehoon Son, Carson Lin, Jeane Bracken, Ely Taitano, Andrew Roberto, Daynara Flores, Ali Nelson, Daisy Babauta, Russell Hocog, Jessica Ortizo, Daryll Deluna, Simon Necesito, Sildrey Veloria, Jackie Quitugua, Sheila Mabutas, Marjorie Ganacias, Moji Deluna, Marie Sablan, Rosemarie Chisato, Beejay Gabor, Jester Taisacan, Edgar Abalos, Jester Taisacan, Andrew Estepa, and Venice Estepa.

Hocog, a 26-year-old operations manager at the Latte Training Academy, joined three challenges and said that "it was a great way to start the new year, ramp up back into shape, and into routine. There

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LEIGH GASES
Some finishers of the Latte Built Gym's 31 Day Challenge which started last Jan. 1 and ended Jan. 31 pose with their free gym membership certificates along with Latte Built Gym owner Derek Cutting and Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. last Friday.